







THE  
EASTERN FRONTIER  
OF  
BRITISH INDIA

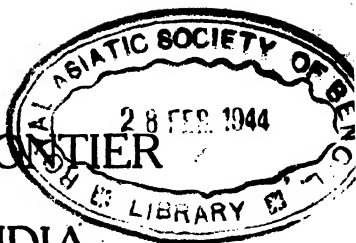


**By the same author**

**PESHWA MADHAV RAO I**

**( *History of the Marathas, 1761-1772* )**

THE  
EASTERN FRONTIER  
OF  
BRITISH INDIA



BY

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## PREFACE

The declaration of war by Japan against the British Empire and the United States of America in December, 1941, the conquest of Burma, and the threat to India from the east, have painfully demonstrated the great importance which should be attached to the eastern frontier of this country from the politico-military point of view. The North-West can no longer monopolise the attention of the defenders of India, nor can serious students of frontier policy, which constitutes so large and vital a part of our national history, confine their study to the routes taken by Alexander and his followers. It is to be deplored that historians of British India have so far concentrated their attention on northern, western and southern India; they have been altogether indifferent to the strange events which culminated in the Burmese Wars and resulted in the incorporation of Assam and Burma in the British Empire. Some years ago I realised the importance of this neglected subject, and the composition of this book was finished a few months before the declaration of war by Japan. Circumstances beyond my control delayed its publication for more than two years. I now submit it to the public, strengthened by the conviction that a pioneer's defects deserve more charity and indulgence than are usually accorded to

those who follow the lead of veteran scholars and deal with well-known subjects.

I have not tried to narrate the history of Burma and Assam; my purpose is to describe in some detail the policy pursued by the British Government towards these States. Probably my readers will agree with me in saying that, throughout the period covered by this volume, that policy was essentially pacific and defensive. Be that as it may, I have dealt with the subject from the British Indian point of view. The internal history of Burma and Assam has been altogether excluded, except in so far as references to internal conditions were found necessary to explain the attitude adopted by British authorities towards particular questions. My stand-point is, therefore, quite different from that adopted by Sir Edward Gait in his *History of Assam* and by Sir Arthur Phayre and Mr. G. E. Harvey in their works entitled *History of Burma*.

A detailed account of the materials utilised in the composition of this volume will be found in the Bibliography. I have relied entirely on original sources, mainly unpublished official documents. No statement made by secondary authorities, contemporary or later, has been accepted unless it is supported by positive documentary evidence. I may, therefore, claim that the entire book is an original contribution to the understanding of British Indian history. Sir Edward Gait

gives a more or less complete, though brief, account of British relations with Assam; but he did not examine unpublished documents. He relied on Sir James Johnstone's *Captain Welsh's Expedition to Assam* ("compiled from records in the Foreign Department of the Government of India") and Wilson's *Documents Illustrative of the Burmese War*. Whether Sir Arthur Phayre and Mr. G. E. Harvey examined all relevant documents, I do not know. But their narrative is very brief (covering only a few pages).

In reply to those readers of mine who look upon quotations from documents with disfavour, I would take shelter behind the following observations of Mr. Churchill (*Marlborough*, Vol. III, p. 10) : "I have tried as far as possible to tell the story through the lips of its actors or from the pens of contemporary writers, feeling sure that a phrase struck out at the time is worth many coined afterwards".

In conclusion, it is my pleasant duty to acknowledge my debt to my teacher, Dr. Surendra Nath Sen, M.A., Ph.D., B.Litt., Keeper of the Records of the Government of India, who made it possible for me to secure with astonishing rapidity thousands of pages of transcripts from the unpublished records preserved in the Imperial Record Department, New Delhi, and kindly allowed me to use the manuscript of his *Records in Oriental Languages, Vol. I, Bengali Letters* before its publication.

To Rai Sahab B. N. Basu, B.A., formerly Superintendent, Imperial Record Department, and Mr. U. N. Sarkar, M.A., an Assistant in the Imperial Record Department, I am indebted for uniform courtesy and ungrudging assistance. From my teachers, Dr. Indubhusan Banerjee, M.A., Ph.D., and Mr. Tripurari Chakravarti, M.A., and my esteemed friend, Dr. Narendra Krishna Sinha, M.A., Ph.D., I received constant encouragement and advice.

A. C. BANERJEE

To

My father

**SJ. SURESH CHANDRA BANERJEE, B.A.**

**A sincere student and earnest  
teacher of History**





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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

**P. C.—Political Consultations.**

**S. C.—Secret Consultations.**



*"Frontiers are the chief anxiety of nearly every Foreign Office in the civilized world, and are the subject of four out of five political treaties or conventions that are now concluded.... Frontier policy is of the first practical importance, and has a more profound effect upon the peace or warfare of nations than any other factor, political or economic."*

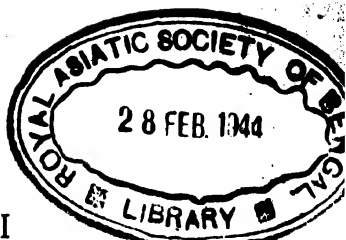
—Lord Curzon











## CHAPTER I

### CAPTAIN WELSH IN ASSAM (1792-1794)

On August 12, 1765, the titular Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II granted to the East India Company the *Diwani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. This secured to the Company 'the Superintendency of all the Lands, and the Collection of all the Revenues' of these three provinces. The Imperial *farman* also imposed upon the Company the responsibility of maintaining an army for the protection of the *Diwani* territories.<sup>1</sup> Within ten years of this remarkable transfer of responsibility Warren Hastings described the Nawab of Bengal as 'a mere pageant without so much as the pageant of authority', and Justice Le Maistre of the Supreme Court of Calcutta openly referred to him as 'this phantom, this man of straw'.

The establishment of the *de facto* authority of the Company in the three provinces necessarily brought it into contact with the neighbouring states.

<sup>1</sup> See W. K. Firminger, *Historical Introduction to the Bengal Portion of the Fifth Report*, Chapter VIII.

On the eastern frontier, with which alone we are concerned in this volume, there were six states: Cooch Behar, Bhutan, Assam, Jaintia, Cachar and Arakan. The repeated incursions of the Bhutanese in Cooch Behar<sup>1</sup> towards the middle of the eighteenth century compelled that state to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Company in 1772. With Assam the Company maintained no diplomatic intercourse. As Lord Cornwallis observed in 1792, "However extraordinary it may appear to people in Europe, we are under the necessity of admitting that, owing to the unremitting jealousy which the chiefs of those countries have hitherto shown of the English, we know little more of the interior parts of Nepal and Assam than of the interior parts of China."<sup>2</sup> Of the European merchants who carried on commercial intercourse with Assam during the period following the battle of Plassey, we are mainly concerned with Baillie<sup>3</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> See *Cooch Behar Select Records*, 2 vols., 1882; *Cooch Behar Select Records*, 1788; Government of Bengal—*Selections from Records*, No. 5; Calica Das Dutt, *Cooch Behar State and Its Land Revenue Settlement*, 1903; S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages*, Vol. I, *Bengali Letters*; Pemberton, *Report on Bhutan*, 1839.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 175.

<sup>3</sup> Auber, *Rise and Progress of the British Power in India*, Vol. II, p. 53.

Raush,<sup>1</sup> who went there in 1765 and 1768 respectively. Two districts of the present province of Assam—Goalpara<sup>2</sup> and Sylhet<sup>3</sup>—were then under British rule, for they had formerly been included in the Mughal *Subah* of Bengal. The petty hill state of Jaintia was over-run in 1774 by a British force,<sup>4</sup> but it was not permanently included within the political orbit of the Company. Cachar came into contact with the English during the closing years of the eighteenth century and Arakan after its absorption in the Burmese Empire in 1784.

The vitality of the Ahom state began to decline during the reign of Lakshmi Singh (1769-1780), who

1 He was probably a German or a Dane. After his death the *Calcutta Gazette* described him as an ex-officer in Frederick the Great's army. For some details about his career, see S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages*, Vol. I, *Bengali Letters, Introduction in Bengali*, pp. 68-73.

2 It was under the administrative jurisdiction of the district of Rangpur (in Bengal). There was a military outpost at Jogighopa on the river Brahmaputra.

3 It was one of the most important revenue districts of the Company.

4 The expedition was led by Major Henniker. It was probably undertaken as a punishment for some act of aggression against the inhabitants of the adjacent plains of Sylhet. (Gait, *History of Assam*, pp. 260-261).

ascended the throne at the age of 53 and left the management of affairs in the hands of the Bar Barua, one of his principal ministers. The most important incident of his reign was the first Moamaria rebellion. The Moamaras were a religious sect founded in the sixteenth century by a Sudra teacher named Anirodh. The members of this sect were "mainly persons of low social rank, such as Doms, Morans, Kacharis, Haris and Chutiyas and, as they denied the supremacy of the Brahmans, they were naturally the special aversion of the orthodox Hindu hierarchy".<sup>1</sup> The persecution suffered by their spiritual leader in the reign of Sib Singh<sup>2</sup> (1714-1744), and the exceptional favour bestowed upon Śākta Hinduism<sup>3</sup> by the Ahom Kings of the eighteenth century, drove them repeatedly into insurrections which played an important part in the overthrow of Ahom rule.

The internal condition of Assam towards the close of the eighteenth century revealed many symptoms of disintegration. Sir Edward Gait thinks that the rapid progress of Hinduism was responsible for the deterioration of the physical and mental strength of the Ahom race. When they 'took Hindu priests, and abandoned the free use of meat and strong

1 Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 58.

2 See Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 178.

3 The Moamaras were Vaishnavas.

drinks', they lost their 'pride of race and martial spirit,' and 'with a less nourishing diet, their physique also underwent a change for the worse.'<sup>1</sup> This explanation hardly gives us the whole truth. The organisation of the Ahom state was quite incompatible with stability and strength.

"The form of government", as Captain Welsh said in a report<sup>2</sup> submitted to the Government of Bengal in 1794, "was monarchical and aristocratical." The monarchy<sup>3</sup> was the monopoly of the descendants of Sukapha (1228-1268), the original Ahom conqueror of the province. It was 'partly hereditary and partly elective'. Brothers sometimes took precedence over sons; "the aristocracy exercised a latitude of election among the nearest relations of the late monarch, with some attention to the claims of nearer consanguinity, but more to those of personal merits". As the first executive officer the King presided over every department of state, but his powers were severely restricted by the privileges of the three Gohains. In distributing titles and offices he had to act 'without the concurrence, but not without the counsel' of these

1 *History of Assam*, p. 179.

2 P. C., February 24, 1794, No. 13A.

3 The Kings were generally known by the title of 'Svargadeva' (Lord of Heaven), which Captain Welsh corrupted into 'Surgey Deo' or 'Surgeo Deo'.

leaders of the aristocracy. He was not the owner of the soil; he could only alienate lands for the legal tenure of which the occupier had no documentary evidence. All uncultivated lands, however, were entirely at his disposal. He could not make peace and war without the concurrence of the aristocracy. He treated with foreign powers through his own ambassadors and in his own name, but with the previous concurrence of the aristocracy. His person was sacred. In passing a sentence of death his order alone could sanction a form by which the criminal's blood might be shed.<sup>1</sup>

The three Gohains referred to above were the Bar Gohain, the Burha Gohain and the Barpatra Gohain. These three offices were the monopoly of five clans descended from the associates of Sukapha. The three Gohains were 'permanent and hereditary

1 Captain Welsh says that the King 'possessed no power over the lives and property of his subject'. This statement is not only inconsistent with his peculiar privilege of shedding the criminal's blood, but also improbable in itself.

The shedding of blood seems to have been regarded by the Ahoms as a special symbol of authority. "Before the reign of Rudra Singh, it had been the custom for the new king before entering the *Singarighar*, to kill a man with his ancestral sword, but that monarch caused a buffalo to be substituted, and the example thus set was followed by all his successors". (Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 232).

councillors of state, little inferior to the monarch in rank.' In case of delinquency, however, the King could remove a Gohain from his office with the concurrence of the other two. The Gohains were entitled on all important occasions to offer their counsel to the King, and it is said that they could even depose a King on the ground of incapacity or delinquency. To each of them the King assigned territories, in which they exercised most of the rights of independent sovereignty. In the event of war they supplied soldiers to the King's army. They also contributed labourers for the construction of public works. They paid no revenue to the royal treasury, although they sometimes supplied some 'trifling articles' to the King's stores. Within their territories they could inflict the sentence of death, but they were not authorized to sanction a form of execution which involved the shedding of the criminal's blood.

The extension of Ahom territory necessitated the appointment of new officers with extensive powers. Of these, two important ministers deserve special mention: the Bar Barua and the Bar Phukan. Their offices were not hereditary; they were chosen from four families<sup>1</sup> descended from the associates of

i Gait (*History of Assam*, p. 233) says that they could be chosen from 'twelve specified families'. We follow the report prepared by Captain Welsh.



Sukapha. They might be dismissed by the King with the concurrence of the Gohains. "The Bar Barua received the revenues of, and administered justice in, those portions of the upper provinces from Sadiya to Koliabar which lay outside the jurisdiction of the Gohains, and was also, usually, the commander of the forces."<sup>1</sup> He was not competent to pass the sentence of death on any criminal. The Bar Phukan's office was considered of higher importance than that of the Bar Barua. The territory under his control extended from Koliabar to Goalpara, and he had his head-quarters at Gauhati. His privileges were similar to those of the Bar Barua, but owing to the distance of his province from the capital, he was authorised to inflict the sentence of death by drowning. Appeals from his judicial decisions were scarcely practicable and were only made on very important occasions.

The army was a loosely organised militia composed of foot soldiers or *paiks*. In time of peace every *got* made up of four *paiks* had to send one of them to join the militia. In time of war two, or even three, *paiks* might be demanded from each *got*. Twenty *paiks* were commanded by a Bora, one hundred by a Saikia, one thousand by a Hazarika, three thousand by a Rajkhowa and six thousand by a

1 Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 233.

Phukan. The Phukans, the Rajkhowas and the Hazarikas were nominated by the King with the advice and concurrence of the Gohains. The Boras and the Saikias were appointed by the Phukans and the Rajkhowas. The *paiks* might demand the dismissal of any Bora or Saikia and the appointment of their own nominees.

There were six vassal chiefs—the Rajas of Darrang, Dimarua, Rani, Barduar, Nauduar and Beltola. They collected the revenues and administered justice in their own territories, but their decisions were subject to appeal to the Bar Phukan and the King. They had to attend personally on the King with their prescribed contingent of men when called upon to do so. All of them, except the Rāja of Rani, had to pay an annual tribute to the royal treasury. The King could dismiss any Raja and appoint his brother or son to fill up the vacancy. It is doubtful whether he had the legal right to put a Raja to death.

Such a constitution<sup>1</sup>—if it deserves that name—based on half-forgotten tribal customs, unaltered by the progress of time and the accumulation of experi-

<sup>1</sup> For a description of the Ahom system of administration, see S. K. Bhuyan, *Ahomar Din* and *Tungkhungia Buranji* (Eng. trans.), Introduction and Glossary of Vernacular terms; Gait, *History of Assam*, Chap. IX.

ence,<sup>1</sup> could not stand the strain imposed upon it by the growth of Burmese power in the east and of British power in the west. The inherent weakness of the political and military systems—the division of authority and the total absence of administrative and military efficiency—could be partially counteracted by the personality of strong Kings like Pratap Singh (1603-1614), Gadadhar Singh (1681-1696) and Rudra Singh (1696-1714), but neither Lakshmi Singh nor his son and successor, Gaurinath Singh (1780-1794), could imitate their example. Captain Welsh refers again and again to the debauchery, imbecility, ignorance, caprice and cruelty of Gaurinath,<sup>2</sup> and no student familiar with the English and Assamese documents<sup>3</sup> of his reign will question the substantial accuracy of this description.<sup>4</sup>

Soon after his accession Gaurinath lent his ear to the Bar Barua and ordered the Bar Gohain and his five sons to be executed.<sup>5</sup> The Bar Barua, however, could not enjoy his victory for many years. His

1 Except in the creation of new offices and new privileges.

2 P. C., February 24, 1794, No. 13A; December 17, 1792, No. 50.

3 S. K. Bhuyan, *Tungkhungia Buranji*, text, paras 167-256.

4 Sir Edward Gait (*History of Assam*, p. 211) says, "Gaurinath was the most incompetent, blood-thirsty, disreputable and cowardly of all the Ahom Kings".

5 P. C., February 24, 1794, No. 13A.

audacity and love of power offended the King; he lost his office as well as his possessions.<sup>1</sup> Gaurinath's administration seems to have been very oppressive, and his vile favourites excited the hatred of all classes of the population.<sup>2</sup>

The Moamarias had suffered terribly as a result of their unsuccessful rebellion during the reign of Lakshmi Singh. Naturally they brooded over those wrongs and spread disaffection amongst the people. Gaurinath followed the old policy of persecution. In 1782 the exasperated Moamarias rebelled, but they were suppressed with terrible atrocities. They rebelled again in 1786, and with the secret support of important officers like the new Bar Gohain,<sup>3</sup> compelled the King to take shelter at Gauhati. For six years (1786-1792) the Burha Gohains, Ghanashyam and his son and successor Purnananda, tried, not without some measure of success, to stem the tide of rebellion.

1 Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 190.

2 "The Assam Raja was a very weak man on whom no dependence could be placed, he being generally intoxicated with opium, and, when sober, totally incapable of all business, which was transacted by his ministers. These men were devoid of honesty, inimical to their master and rapacious to the country".—*Foreign Department Miscellaneous Records*, No. 8, Memoranda, Vol. I, No. 7.

3 P. C., February 24, 1794, No. 13A. Gait (*History of Assam*, pp. 191-192) does not mention this.

The Moamaras occupied the capital (Rangpur) and placed one Bharat Singh on the throne.<sup>1</sup> Gaurinath migrated from one place to another, and his "numerous followers irritated the villagers by their constant demands for supplies and other acts of oppression, and the discontent thus caused found vent in open revolt."<sup>2</sup> Many petty chiefs, officers and adventurers 'assumed independence in various parts of the country.'<sup>3</sup>

Of the six principal vassal chiefs the Rajas of Nauduar and Darrang revolted. The former 'esteemed the time favourable to his personal independence, which was accordingly asserted, without any apparent provocation.'<sup>4</sup> In the case of Darrang, however, there was a provocation. Gaurinath had treacherously seized and put to death Raja Hansa Narayan of

1 Bharat Singh's coins, dated 1793, are still extant. But the condition of the country under Moamaras control was terrible: "... the burning of villages, the looting of supplies and the wanton destruction of crops led to a terrible famine: rice was not obtainable, and the sufferings of the people were so great that many abandoned their own children. Even persons of the highest castes ... were reduced to eating the flesh of cows, buffaloes, dogs and jackals." (Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 194).

2 Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 196.

3 P. C., February 24, 1794, No. 13A.

4 P. C., February 24, 1794, No. 13A.

Darrang on a false charge of disloyalty,<sup>1</sup> set aside the claims of his son Krishna Narayan, and handed over the state to another member of the family named Bishnu Narayan. Krishna Narayan requested the Government of Bengal to re-instate him, offering to hold his state as a vassal of the Company. Lord Cornwallis refused to comply with his request. Krishna Narayan then collected troops, expelled Bishnu Narayan from Darrang, and even occupied Kamrup<sup>2</sup> and North Gauhati.<sup>3</sup> His small army was composed mainly of *Barkandazes*<sup>4</sup> recruited from Bengal.<sup>5</sup>

With regard to these internal troubles in the neighbouring province Lord Cornwallis wanted to pursue a policy of non-intervention. By an order dated September 9, 1791, the Government of Bengal

1 According to Bishnu Narayan and the ministers of the King, Hansa Narayan openly waged war against Gaurinath. (S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages*, Vol. I, *Bengali Letters*, letter nos. 39, 40).

2 P. C., February 24, 1794, No. 13A.

3 P. C., March 16, 1792, No. 11.

4 Mercenary soldiers.

5 Although the documents uniformly refer to these mercenaries as Bengal *Barkandazes*, most of them were not *bona fide* inhabitants of Bengal. There were Sikhs from the Punjab, Hindustanis from Bundelkhand, and fighting *Sannyasis* from different provinces. (P. C., January 23, 1793, No. 4).

asked Lumsden, Collector of Rangpur, 'neither to assist nor prevent' Krishna Narayan in raising such force as he might think proper so long as his troops acted peacefully within British territories. Krishna Narayan took so much advantage of Lumsden's neutrality that Gaurinath's ministers came to Rangpur and requested the Collector to recall the *Barkandazes*. Lumsden thought that he was not warranted by his instructions in acceding to this request. Thereupon the Assamese ministers asked him to forward to Calcutta a petition praying for the intervention of the Supreme Government.<sup>1</sup> The Government informed Lumsden that he had misunderstood the implication of their order dated September 9, 1791. He was asked to prevent Krishna Narayan from openly enlisting *Barkandazes* within the Company's territories, although British subjects might be allowed, if they liked, to repair to the Darrang Raja's territories and to serve him there.<sup>2</sup> Lord Cornwallis was not willing to forget the friendly professions contained in his letter of July 23, 1787, to the King of Assam.<sup>3</sup> A procla-

1 P. C., March 16, 1792, No. 11.

2 P. C., March 16, 1792, No. 17.

3 P. C., March 16, 1792, No. 16.

A letter was written to the King on June 12, 1792, saying that the *Barkandazes* had been asked to return to Bengal, and

mation was issued, asking the *Barkandazes* to return to Bengal, and warning them not to use the name of the Company in support of their plundering activities. They replied that they were serving the cause of Krishna Narayan in return for pay and that the Company was in no way implicated in their work.<sup>1</sup>

Within a few months the Government of Bengal found it difficult to remain a neutral spectator of the terrible civil feuds in Assam. Purnananda Burha Gohain repeatedly asked for assistance, and his application was supported by Raush, the farmer of the salt revenues at Goalpara.<sup>2</sup> Lord Cornwallis felt that the British Government had some indirect responsibility for Krishna Narayan's success, which was mainly due to the service he received from the *Barkandazes* recruited from British territory. So the Governor-

re-iterating the Governor-General's friendship and good wishes. (P. C., June 15, 1792, No. 17).

1 S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages*, Vol. I, *Bengali Letters*, letter no. 31.

2 Krishna Narayan sent a *vakil* to Lumsden to protest against Raush's conduct: "Mr. Raush having come and joined the Assamese has encouraged them to plunder and depredate ... my country ... " The *vakil* was sent by Lumsden to Captain Welsh at Goalpara. (P. C., November 26, 1792, No. 8, 9). Raush was an opportunist; he did not hesitate to commit depredations in Gaurinath's territory. (S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages*, Vol. I, *Bengali Letters*, letter nos. 29, 30).



General, 'advised as well from motives of humanity as from a wish to be better informed of the interior state of Assam, its commerce, etc.,' decided to send 'an active and prudent officer' with six companies of Sepoys to Goalpara. In September, 1792, 360 Sepoys were despatched under the command of Captain Welsh, with Lieutenant MacGregor as Adjutant and Ensign Wood as Surveyor. Lord Cornwallis refused to give him detailed instructions 'until he should transmit every information that he could obtain when near the scene that related to the object of his future operations.'<sup>1</sup>

Captain Welsh arrived at Goalpara on November 8, 1792, with three companies of Sepoys. Here he was met by Bishnu Narayan, who urgently requested him to march at once to the relief of Gaurinath, heavily pressed at that time by Krishna Narayan and the *Barkandazes*. In one of his letters, shown to Captain Welsh by Bishnu Narayan, Gaurinath compared himself to a heavy-laden ship on the point of sinking.<sup>2</sup> Captain Welsh sent a report to Calcutta and decided to proceed to Gauhati, where the King of Assam was then besieged.<sup>3</sup> Lord Cornwallis was conscious that

<sup>1</sup> *Foreign Department Miscellaneous Records*, No. 8, Memoranda, Vol. I, No. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 197.

<sup>3</sup> P. C., November 26, 1792, No. 7.

his 'local knowledge of Assam' was 'no less imperfect than our information on the strength and views of the contending parties in that country'. Instead of sending detailed instructions he confined himself to a general outline of his wishes and left Captain Welsh free to adopt such measures as he considered necessary. He was directed to try to compose the disturbances in Assam by mediation and without bloodshed. The personal safety of Gaurinath was to be regarded as one of his primary objects. If the Darrang Raja refused to accept his mediation or showed a design to gain time by insincere negotiations, Captain Welsh was authorized 'without too much exposing the detachment ... to act immediately with the utmost rigour ... for the Raja of Assam's relief'. He was to occupy some fort or post where he could collect a large stock of provisions and from which he could maintain communication by river with Goalpara. At the same time notice was issued to the *Barkandazes* that, if they did not return home within a limited time, their families would be seized and their properties confiscated by the Government of Bengal.<sup>1</sup>

Captain Welsh started for Gauhati on November 16. Three days later his boats confronted near Nagar-

1 P. C., November 26, 1792, No. 6.

bera hill some small canoes carrying Gaurinath and a few attendants. The King had escaped from Gauhati at two o'clock on the previous morning. His flight was due to the capture of the southern side of Gauhati by a *Bairagi*<sup>1</sup> who had put himself at the head of a rabble of low class *Doms*. Gaurinath's house was set on fire by these adventurers; he fled with four attendants, leaving his family behind. The King assured Captain Welsh that as soon as he appeared at Gauhati his friends would join him and his enemies would be compelled to retire.<sup>2</sup> In this interview "it appeared very plainly that his views in soliciting aid from the British Government were not confined to getting rid of the Bengal Barkundosses but he wished to be assisted by British troops against all enemies who

1 Captain Welsh refers to him as the 'Burjee Rajah' and reports, "Neither the Raja nor any of his people can tell me who the Burjee Rajah is. They only say that their country is in such a state of anarchy and confusion that any man who can pick up 100 desperate fellows sets himself up for a Raja". (P. C., December 17, 1792, No. 47). Captain Welsh adds that this Raja was 'desirous of getting assistance from Gaurinath to drive out Krishna Narain'. In that case Gaurinath's house must have been burnt by mistake. (P. C., November 30, 1792, No. 31).

A letter of the Assam ministers shows that Gaurinath was driven away from Nowgong by the *Bairagi*. (S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages*, Vol. I, *Bengali Letters*, letter no. 40).

2 P. C., November 30, 1792, No. 31.

by his own account were numerous, and in this hope he was encouraged by Captain Welsh.<sup>1</sup>

The Captain decided to proceed to Gauhati 'with the utmost expedition.'<sup>2</sup> On his way he was joined by the Bar Barua<sup>3</sup> and the tributary Chief of Rani.<sup>4</sup> Gauhati was captured without any struggle on November 25; the *Bairagi* made his escape, but about sixty of his followers were taken prisoner. Gaurinath then 'entered into the town in great state.'<sup>5</sup>

On November 26 Captain Welsh had a visit from Gaurinath and the Bar Barua. After the usual compliments the latter requested Captain Welsh to assist the King not only against the *Barkandazes* but also against the *Bairagi* and the Moamarias. Captain Welsh promised to do his best. The minister then enquired whether the Captain considered his force sufficient for the purpose. Captain Welsh replied that if after obtaining a thorough knowledge of the country and the strength of the King's enemies he considered his force to be insufficient, he 'should make it known to Government and act agreeable to their

1 *Foreign Department Miscellaneous Records*, No. 8, Memoranda, Vol. I, No. 7.

2 P. C., November 30, 1792, No. 31.

3 P. C., December 3, 1792, No. 9.

4 P. C., December 17, 1792, No. 47.

5 P. C., December 17, 1792, No. 47.

instruction.' Gaurinath and the Bar Barua were satisfied. They then pointed out that the best way to deal with the *Barkandazes* would be to ask them to come to Gauhati and, if they came, to induce them to return home 'by promising to write to Government in their favour to restore their houses to them.' With this request Captain Welsh agreed to comply; but when he was further asked to invite Krishna Narayan to Gauhati and to deliver him to Gaurinath as soon as he arrived there, he pointed out that the King had not applied to the Governor-General for assistance against the Darrang Raja, nor had the Government authorised the British force to take hostile measures against any one besides the *Barkandazes*.<sup>1</sup>

Krishna Narayan was naturally anxious to conciliate the British authorities. On November 27 his *vakil* saw Captain Welsh and assured him that 'neither his master nor the Burkondosses would fight against the Company.' When Captain Welsh showed him the draft of a *parwana* asking the *Barkandazes* to appear at Gauhati within six days, he said that they would certainly come but 'begged that they might have ten days instead of six to make their appearance.' Captain Welsh satisfied him on this

1 P. C., December 17, 1792, No. 47.

point. The *vakil* told him that Krishna Narayan was prepared to come to Gauhati if he was assured of protection. Captain Welsh replied that he would protect his life. The *vakil* said 'that was all he wanted'.<sup>1</sup>

When the above-mentioned *parwana*<sup>2</sup> was served on the *Barkandazes*, they sent an *arzi*<sup>3</sup> saying that 'in obeying his (i.e., Krishna Narayan's) order we have not done any thing that should bring displeasure on us'. They added that one of their *jamadars* having died and another having gone elsewhere, they were not in a position to reach Gauhati within ten days. To this *arzi* Captain Welsh replied by another *parwana*<sup>4</sup> demanding their presence at Gauhati. The *jamadars* again sent an *arzi* professing obedience to him; but, they went on, "our brethren are separated from us, some of them at the distance of two or three days' journey; hence we have sent people to call them and when they arrive we will come in a body to the Presence."<sup>5</sup>

Within a few days Captain Welsh realised the difficulty of his position. Krishna Narayan was wait-

1 P. C., December 17, 1792, No. 47.

2 P. C., December 17, 1792, No. 48.

3 P. C., December 17, 1792, No. 48.

4 P. C., December 17, 1792, No. 48.

5 P. C., December 17, 1792, No. 51.

ing with his whole force on the bank opposite Gauhati; in spite of his *vakil's* profession of friendship he was not 'at all inclined to go off or come in' to the British camp. The King and his ministers were incapable of giving any effective assistance. "This poor debilitated man of a Raja," Capatin Welsh reported to the Governor-General, "is not capable of transacting any kind of business himself. He is either praying or washing, and when he is to be seen he is intoxicated with eating opium. His ministers are a set of villains ... ." The detachment was threatened with scarcity of provisions. For the time being Captain Welsh succeeded in inducing the King and his ministers to summon a market, and a large quantity of rice was brought.<sup>1</sup>

Unwilling to begin an open contest with Krishna Narayan,<sup>2</sup> Captain Welsh tried to persuade the Assamese ministers to settle the dispute with him. He pointed out that he was not authorised by his instructions to proceed against the Darrang Raja, that

1 P. C., December 17, 1792, No. 50.

2 Although Captan Welsh told Gaurinath and his ministers that he could not fight against Krishna Narayan without specific instructions from the Government, in his letters to the Governor-General he seems to imply that he was restrained merely by the weakness of his detachment. *Vide* his letter to Lord Cornwallis, dated December 4, 1792. (P. C., December 17, 1792, No. 50).

his detachment was 'too small for the purpose,' that it was illegal and unwise to punish Krishna Narayan for his father's offence, and that if the King wanted to go to Garhgaon,<sup>1</sup> 'it would be proper to have friends in the rear.' If the King agreed to re-establish Krishna Narayan in his father's possession upon the customary terms, Captain Welsh was prepared, on behalf of the East India Company, to guarantee his good conduct. To this proposal Gaurinath replied that it was not customary to re-establish rebels in their old possessions. He was, however, prepared to reinstate Krishna Narayan if it was proved that he was not 'very culpable.' The unfortunate King then threw himself 'entirely and unequivocally' into 'the arms of the Company,' asked for assistance against Krishna Narayan and all other rebels, and promised to reimburse the Company for military expenses as soon as he would again be the real ruler of the country.<sup>2</sup>

It was clear that the narrow object with which the expedition had originally started—the expulsion of the *Barkandazes*—would not meet the requirements of the situation. At the time of receiving Gaurinath's application for assistance the authorities in Calcutta

1 The old capital of Assam.

2 P. C., December 17, 1792, No. 50.



were under the impression that Krishna Narayan 'was entirely under the control of the Burkundosses whom he had invited to assist him against the Raja of Assam and that these troops constituted his principal strength.'<sup>1</sup> But on his arrival in Assam Captain Welsh found that Krishna Narayan's force, five to seven thousand strong, consisted of *Barkandazes*, Gosains and Assamese mercenaries.<sup>2</sup> He had 'a number of miserable guns' and he was in possession of one of the strongholds on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. The most formidable enemy of the King of Assam was, however, the Moamaria force, of the existence of which the British authorities seem to have been altogether ignorant<sup>3</sup> until the arrival of the expedition at Gauhati. Gaurinath could not maintain his authority in his country even if Captain Welsh compelled the *Barkandazes* to return to Bengal. He sent to the Governor-General a detailed report,<sup>4</sup> with the recommendation that additional

1 *Foreign Department Miscellaneous Records*, No. 8, Memoranda, Vol. I, No. 7.

2 "Krishna Narayan's forces were collected from all parts of the country as far as Lahore, and as to the wandering tribe of Sannyasis, they have no home." (Captain Welsh). (P. C., January 23, 1793, No. 4).

3 See Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 199.

4 Dated December 4, 1792.

troops<sup>1</sup> should be despatched to assist him in placing the King in his capital.<sup>2</sup>

Lord Cornwallis expressed his satisfaction at 'the prudence and circumspection' shown by Captain Welsh, but hesitated to undertake new commitments in Assam. He remarked, "It is not consistent with the political view of conduct which has been prescribed for the Company to attempt the conquest of a country from which we have received no injury, nor it is even the wish of this Government to acquire an influence in the internal management of the affairs of Assam, and it is therefore particularly necessary that our temporary interference should be confined to the objects which were originally expected to be accomplished by the detachment under your command." These objects were the expulsion of the *Barkandazes* from Assam and 'the re-establishment of the Raja in his lawful authority.' The Governor-General believed that Captain Welsh would be able 'to effect the first object' either 'by conciliatory means or by intimidation.' In dealing with the second object the Captain was asked 'to act with the utmost caution ... in avoiding to give any hope that may commit this Government further in the business of that country than is

1 One battalion to be sent to Gauhati and another to be kept as a reserve at Bijni; two six-pounders; transport cattle.

2 P. C., December 17, 1792, No. 50.

conformable with our intention and the general scheme of our policy.' Lord Cornwallis requested him to inform the King that the British Government could not 'take any further concern' about the affairs of Assam unless Krishna Narayan was restored to his ancestral possessions, 'on the condition however that he (i.e., Krishna Narayan) shall assist in re-establishing the Raja's authority over the other parts of his dominions.' If Krishna Narayan agreed to submit to the King and the *Barkandazes* returned to Bengal, the Governor-General expected that Captain Welsh would be able to take Gaurinath to his capital without the assistance of an additional force.<sup>1</sup>

Captain Welsh had already made up his mind to punish Krishna Narayan.<sup>2</sup> On December 6 he

<sup>1</sup> Cornwallis to Welsh, December 18, 1792. (P. C., December 21, 1792, No 17).

<sup>2</sup> Sir Edward Gait says that "Captain Welsh had become convinced that Krishna Narayan was trifling with him." (*History of Assam*, p. 200). The Captain's letters do not disclose the reasons, if any, which led him to this conclusion. On December 4 he wrote to the Governor-General that Krishna Narayan was 'the first object.' Two days later he attacked him, without waiting for the Governor-General's reply. He says that want of provisions prevented him from making the attack earlier. (P. C., December 21, 1792, No. 19). While Lord Cornwallis was harping on caution, the man on the spot involved the Government in far-reaching commitments by his aggressive activities.

crossed the Brahmaputra and defeated the Darrang Raja.<sup>1</sup> Lord Cornwallis congratulated Captain Welsh on his success but at the same time reminded him that "the material objections to our engaging deeply in the affairs of Assam are as strong as ever."<sup>2</sup> The Collector of Rangpur was directed by the Government to seize and confine the families of the *Barkandazes*.<sup>3</sup>

Krishna Narayan did not take this defeat very seriously; he soon collected his troops and began to commit depredations at some distance from Gauhati. Captain Welsh thought it necessary 'to give protection and confidence to the inhabitants and enable them to cut and bring in their crops of grain.' A detachment under Lieutenant Williams was sent against Krishna Narayan. An engagement took place at Khatikuchi. Krishna Narayan's men fled across the Bhutan frontier.<sup>4</sup> He was deserted by most of

1 P. C., December 21, 1792, No. 19. Captain Welsh gives a detailed account of the engagement and illustrates it with geographical sketches.

2 P. C., December 24, 1792, No. 14. Lumsden could 'only find the residence of three men in all his collectorship.' (P. C., January 23, 1793, No. 4). Later on he seized and confined six *Barkandazes*. (P. C., February 1, 1793, No. 19).

3 P. C., December 21, 1792, No. 22.

4 At that time the Bhutan frontier extended into the plains as far as the Gosain Kamala Ali. (Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 201).

the *Barkandazes*,<sup>1</sup> although the Gosains remained loyal to him.<sup>2</sup> Captain Welsh believed that Krishna Narayan had 'the strongest inclination to put himself under my protection, but was prevented by the Jamadars, who had him entirely in their power, and obliged him to act in the manner they conceived would best promote their own interested views.' He was, therefore, prepared to follow the Governor-General's instructions by asking Gaurinath to reinstate him.<sup>3</sup>

The problem of Gaurinath's restoration was more difficult. Lord Cornwallis had expressed his own misgivings in a letter<sup>4</sup> written to Captain Welsh before receiving the news of Krishna Narayan's expulsion from Gauhati. "I do not see," he observed, "how we can reconcile it to any principle of justice or humanity to establish by force the authority of the wretched Raja and his worthless and cruel minister in that country." The whole country was 'so completely convulsed' that it was very doubtful whether

1 The Bhutanese demanded that all *Barkandazes* entering their territory must be disbanded, that they must offer no excuse to the English to enter Bhutan, and that they could remain in Bhutan if they lived peacefully. Thereupon one of the principal *jamadars* came to Bijni. (P. C., January 14, 1793, No. 22).

2 P. C., January 11, 1793, No. 23.

3 P. C., January 14, 1793, No. 21

4 P. C., December 31, 1792, No. 13.

an accommodation with Krishna Narayan alone would confirm Gaurinath's authority. So Lord Cornwallis asked Captain Welsh to summon an assembly of 'all the chiefs who have any power or followers' and to find out, by full and frank discussion, 'the best means to prevent the country from being totally ruined.' The Governor-General was careful to add that Gaurinath 'must previously be required to dismiss the ministers whose misconduct and treachery have brought upon him the misfortune which he at present suffers.'

Thus Captain Welsh was authorised indirectly to interfere in the internal affairs of Assam. So he boldly suggested that Gaurinath's authority could not be re-established 'without interfering with the internal management of the country.' He had already compelled the King to dismiss the Bar Phukan<sup>1</sup> and pressed for the removal of the Bar Barua as an essential preliminary to the restoration of order. The ministers tried to keep the King in a 'state of subjection.' "The most enlightened," Captain Welsh reported to Lord Cornwallis, "of the inhabitants here declare it to be their opinion, that until every man in power about the Raja is dismissed, and he is in some

1 S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages*, Vol. I, *Bengali Letters*, letter no. 40.

degree under my own management, he will not be enabled to assert his own rights, or exercise his lawful authority. Such a measure I do not think myself authorized to take without being empowered to do it by your Lordship."<sup>1</sup> Lord Cornwallis thereupon authorised him to demand the dismissal of the King's bad counsellors and the appointment of 'men of the best character in the country to supply their places.'<sup>2</sup>

In the meanwhile Gaurinath had agreed to reinstate Krishna Narayan, and it had been arranged that a *Durbar* should be held twice a week, when the ministers and Captain Welsh 'in concert might enquire into the state of the country and issue the necessary orders to his rebellious ministers and refractory Zamindars.'<sup>3</sup> Captain Welsh sent a letter<sup>4</sup> to Krishna Narayan, assuring him that he would be reinstated if he agreed to 'assist in re-establishing the Raja's authority over the other parts of his Dominions,' and that if he was in future disturbed by the King of Assam, the British Government would 'in no shape' take part against him.

Captain Welsh had not yet correctly appraised the character of the man whom he was trying to

1 P. C., January 14, 1793, No. 21.

2 P. C., January 17, 1793, No. 10.

3 P. C., January 17, 1793, No. 11.

4 P. C., January 17, 1793, No. 12.

assist. Gaurinath left the British camp to visit his family for a few days.<sup>1</sup> During his absence the Bar Barua carried out the execution of six prisoners according to his order. The matter being reported to Captain Welsh, he sent an officer to release all prisoners in confinement. 70 persons were released; they had been so much weakened by starvation that 2 expired on the way and the rest were scarcely able to walk to the Captain's tent. Of these prisoners 6 had been sentenced to death, but Captain Welsh could discover 'no fault they have been guilty of.' It was also discovered that 113 persons had been executed since his arrival at Gauhati. He was convinced that 'the Raja's visit to his family was proposed merely to give the Bar Barua an opportunity of plundering the country and destroying the inhabitants without fear of discovery.'<sup>2</sup>

These atrocities of the ministers, committed with the connivance, if not the active support, of the King, compelled Captain Welsh to adopt measures which he himself described as 'harsh.' The Bar Barua and the Soladhara Phukan<sup>3</sup> were arrested. Gaurinath was informed 'that while he continues to countenance acts of oppression and cruelty, and leaves

1 P. C., January 23, 1793, No. 4.

2 P. C., January 28, 1793, No. 7.

3 Keeper of the Royal wardrobe.



the management of his country in such worthless and infamous hands,' he could expect no protection from the British Government.<sup>1</sup> The King at first tried to keep himself away from the British camp by protracting the length of his visit to his family. Captain Welsh then threatened that if he refused to come, the Bar Barua and the Soladhara Phukan would be sent 'out of the country.'<sup>2</sup> On February 2 the King arrived at the camp and had a prolonged interview with Captain Welsh. "The Raja," reported the Captain to the Governor-General, "betrayed his own cruel disposition and conducted himself in the most intemperate manner. He owned with a degree of exultation that ... if he was deprived of his power of killing or mutilating<sup>3</sup> his subjects at pleasure, he would not wish to be a Raja ... He declared that every act of cruelty and rapacity was committed by his order and not by that of his ministers; and that he positively would not dismiss them."<sup>4</sup> Captain Welsh

1 P. C., January 28, 1793, No. 7.

2 They were sent at first to Jogighopa, then to Rangpur (in Bengal). (S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages*, Vol. I, *Bengali Letters*, letter no. 40).

3 On his way to the camp he had ordered one of his servants to be mutilated. The man was quite innocent. He lost his nose and eyes. (P. C., February 15, 1793, No. 16).

4 Welsh to Cornwallis, February 4, 1793.

thereupon deprived the King temporarily of all authority and informed him, "One hundred attendants are allowed you and by them alone your orders will be obeyed." Guards were posted round his compound and no one was allowed to see him without the Captain's permission.<sup>1</sup> The administration of the country was entrusted to the newly appointed Bar Phukan. A manifesto was issued to the people of Assam, asking them not to hold any communication with the King and to obey no order which in his name might be conveyed to them.<sup>2</sup> Another manifesto<sup>3</sup> was addressed to the Chiefs and Zamindars of Assam, inviting them to assemble at Gauhati 'in order that we may all conjointly concert measures to prevent your country from being entirely subverted.'

Captain Welsh was conscious that, in suspending and confining the King and in assuming personal

1 P. C., February 15, 1793, No. 17.

2 P. C., February 15, 1793, No. 17. Sir Edward Gait (*History of Assam*, pp. 201-202) says that in this manifesto "the people were informed that, in future, justice would be righteously administered, and certain days were appointed on which complaints would be heard and grievances redressed." This is the substance of a manifesto which Captain Welsh *had proposed to circulate before his interview with Gaurinath*. (P. C., January 28, 1793, No. 8). We have given the substance of the manifesto *actually circulated after that interview*.

3 P. C., January 28, 1793, No. 8.

responsibility for the internal government of Assam, he was exceeding the authority delegated to him by the Government, but he claimed to be excused on the ground that he had 'done it with a view to promote the cause of humanity.'<sup>1</sup> To this appeal in the name of humanity Lord Cornwallis found it difficult not to respond. He remarked that the measures were 'of a very strong nature,' but they deserved his approbation because they had proceeded from 'motives of humanity.' He also authorised Captain Welsh to give a 'general assurance' to the people of Assam that they would not be abandoned to 'the Raja's savage cruelty.'<sup>2</sup> Thus an expedition sent to restore a King became an arbiter between him and his people. Emboldened by the Governor-General's anxiety for the welfare of the people of Assam Captain Welsh wrote, "A temporary interference with the management of this country will not answer the humane intention of Government. The inhabitants are anxious to retain the Company's protection ... ."<sup>3</sup>

One of the motives which had led the Government of Bengal to give a favourable reception to Gaurinath's appeal for help was the establishment of

1 Welsh to Cornwallis, February 4, 1793.

2 P. C., February 22, 1793, No. 13.

3 P. C., March 11, 1793, No. 15.

commercial relations between Assam and British India.<sup>1</sup> That motive was now strengthened by the necessity of collecting money for meeting the expenses of the expeditionary troops. Owing to the anarchical condition of the country the export and import duties were the most fruitful sources of revenue. Accordingly Captain Welsh regarded the commerce of Assam as the subject of his particular care. Before Gaurinath's accession all export and import duties on salt were collected by two Baruas at the Kandar<sup>2</sup> *chokey*<sup>3</sup> opposite Goalpara. The duties generally varied between ten and six per cent. During Gaurinath's reign these two Baruas succeeded by corruption and violence in monopolising for their own benefit the entire salt trade of Assam. Raush, the English merchant of Goalpara, entered into an agreement to furnish them with whatever quantity of salt they might require; as a result, 'almost the whole trade of Assam came through their hands to him.' Captain Welsh decided to abolish this monopoly, 'injurious to the Raja, prejudicial to trade and oppressive to the inhabitants.'<sup>4</sup>

1 Cornwallis to Welsh, February 21, 1793. P. C., February 22, No. 13.

2 Village Hadira on the Brahmaputra, opposite Goalpara.

3 A place for the collection of customs, tolls, etc.

4 Welsh to Cornwallis, February 21, 1793. P. C., March 11, 1793, No. 15.

For that purpose he entered into an agreement with Gaurinath. The duties legally imposed on salt (ten per cent) were to be regularly collected at Kandar *chokey*. It was expected that the total sum realised would amount to one lakh of rupees, from which the cost of collection would be deducted and Rs. 26,000 would be paid to the King. The remaining sum would be appropriated to defray the expenses of the British detachment serving in Assam.<sup>1</sup> With regard to other articles of trade, British subjects were left free to sell their commodities in all parts of Assam, subject to the payment of ten per cent. duties. An exception was to be made in the case of materials used in war, which could be supplied only to the British troops in Assam.<sup>2</sup> All exports from Assam were liable to pay ten per cent. duties. No European merchant or adventurer was entitled to reside permanently in Assam.<sup>3</sup> Lord Cornwallis regarded this agreement as likely to 'prove advantageous to both countries as soon as Assam is in a state of sufficient

1 P. C., March 11, 1793, No. 17, 18. For the text of the agreement, see Appendix A.

2 Many merchants later on abused this privilege by passing the Kandar *chokey* without paying the duties under the pretence of bringing supplies for Captain Welsh. (P. C., April 22, 1793, No. 13).

3 P. C., March 11, 1793, No. 18.

tranquillity to admit of its being carried into complete effect.’<sup>1</sup>

It was now necessary to take up the question of administrative re-organisation, but the response of the principal Chiefs to the invitation of Captain Welsh was not very satisfactory.<sup>2</sup> He asked whether the Governor-General wished him to give up the project of holding an assembly of the notables or to punish those who refused to come for consultation and advice.<sup>3</sup> Lord Cornwallis replied that no military expedition was to be undertaken without ‘an absolute necessity.’ The Captain was directed to persevere ‘in endeavouring to procure a meeting of the chiefs and in cordially inviting the return’ of Krishna Narayan. The Governor-General once again tried to restrain his agent by reminding him of the policy of non-aggression to which the Government was committed. “However desirable,” he observed, “it may be from consideration both of policy and humanity to take such active means as our force enables us to adopt in order to restore tranquillity, order and some degree of regular government in Assam, we must yet be careful not to suffer ourselves to be diverted even by the most benevolent motives from a strict obe-

1 P. C., March 18, 1793, No. 12.

2 P. C., March 11, 1793, No. 15.

3 P. C., March 22, 1793, No. 33.

dience to the spirit of the acts of the British legislature,<sup>1</sup> and from a steady perseverance in that system of moderation and peace which alone can convince the native powers that we have utterly abandoned all views of ambition and conquest...."<sup>2</sup>

Since the confinement of the King the administration had been under the direct management of Captain Welsh, who regularly held public *Durbars* and decided disputes brought to his notice. He found that the old customary taxes were not 'high or oppressive' to the people; 'they only became so from the King's extreme imbecility and the rapacity of his ministers and collectors.'<sup>3</sup> Gaurinath had surrendered himself to the inevitable. Early in April Captain Welsh reported that he was 'perfectly tractable' and offered no opposition to his transactions. This submission was rewarded with the removal of all restraints previously imposed upon him.<sup>4</sup> But the Governor-General was not yet prepared to publish for general information the terms of the commercial agreement with Gaurinath. He was not convinced that

1 Pitt's India Act (1784) declared that "to pursue schemes of conquest, and extension of dominion in India, are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour, and the policy of the nation."

2 P. C., April 5, 1793, No. 34.

3 P. C., March 22, 1793, No. 33.

4 P. C., April 22, 1793, No. 13.

anarchy was at an end in Assam and he was not willing to allow British subjects 'to engage too deeply' in commercial transactions there.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the close of April five<sup>2</sup> companies of sepoy arrived at Gauhati from Calcutta.<sup>3</sup> The season for campaigns was almost over; so it was decided to halt at Gauhati during the rainy season.<sup>4</sup> Captain Welsh had already collected nearly six months' supplies for the whole detachment. The sepoy had erected temporary huts for themselves. A sufficient number of boats was collected.<sup>5</sup> The troops were in excellent health.<sup>6</sup> In May a Quarter-Master was appointed 'to superintend the public buildings, boats and stores, and to manage the grain department.'<sup>7</sup> Captain Welsh was thus 'perfectly prepared for the wet season'.<sup>8</sup>

Before these arrangements were completed Krishna Narayan had sent a *vakil* to Captain Welsh

1 P. C., April 22, 1793, No. 14.

2 Sir Edward Gait (*History of Assam*, p. 203) says that six companies were sent, but our documents do not support him. See P. C., April 22, 1793, No. 13, and May 1, 1793, No. 16.

3 P. C., May 1, 1793, No. 16.

4 Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 203.

5 P. C., April 22, 1793, No. 13.

6 P. C., April 22, 1793, No. 14.

7 P. C., May 31, 1793, No. 11.

8 P. C., May 1, 1793, No. 16.



for conducting negotiations.<sup>1</sup> He was prepared to pay tribute to the Company, and he asserted his claim to a portion of the district of Kamrup on the ground that it was held by his ancestors.<sup>2</sup> He had already descended from Bhutan into the plains below.<sup>3</sup> Captain Welsh sent Lieutenant MacGregor to meet him on his way, 'give him confidence, and prevent any disturbance' which his return might occasion.<sup>4</sup> On May 20 Krishna Narayan arrived at Gauhati with 400 *Barkandazes*. The *Barkandazes*, it was apprehended, might again create disturbances. So they were sent to Rangpur and paid their arrears from the British treasury.<sup>5</sup> On May 24 Krishna Narayan was installed in his ancestral *gadi*. He still pressed his claim on Kamrup;<sup>6</sup> it was, however, disputed by two other members of his family as well as Gaurinath. Captain Welsh placed him temporarily in charge of that district and proceeded to investigate into the validity of his claim.<sup>7</sup> The evidence collected by him

1 P. C., May 1, 1793, No. 16.

2 Krishna Narayan to Welsh. P. C., May 1, 1793, No. 17.

3 P. C., May 1, 1793, No. 17.

4 P. C., May 1, 1793, No. 16.

5 P. C., June 3, 1793, No. 9, 10, 11. The arrears amounted to Rs. 5,782-4 as. 4p. Krishna Narayan agreed to repay this sum within six months with 12 p.c. interest.

6 P. C., June 14, 1793, No. 11.

7 P. C., July 15, 1793, No. 26.

from various sources proved unfavourable to Krishna Narayan,<sup>1</sup> but Captain Welsh did not give any final decision.<sup>2</sup>

Many difficulties were gradually cropping up owing to the King's weakness and aversion to business. Captain Welsh did not like to communicate with him through his ministers, but it was very difficult to arrange an interview. As he reported to the Governor-General, "... he is so much averse to business, and so wantonly in a state of intoxication which renders him unfit for it, that I am always obliged to request an interview with him many days before I am likely to obtain it, and even then sometimes not without compulsion."<sup>3</sup> He was under the influence of 'crafty priests and worthless dependents ... who have influence enough to prevail upon him to withhold his acquiescence to any measure ...'<sup>4</sup> The two dismissed ministers, the Bar Barua and the Soladhara Phukan,<sup>5</sup> were creating disturbances in Upper Assam. A minor son of the former collected a considerable force and realised contributions from

1 P. C., August 12, 1793, No. 8.

2 Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 203, foot note.

3 P. C., July 15, 1793, No. 26.

4 P. C., July 15, 1793, No. 26.

5 They were then at Jogighopa.

petty Chiefs and Zamindars. The Soladhara Phukan secretly negotiated with the King himself.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the close of the rainy season Captain Welsh prepared to restore Gaurinath's authority in Upper Assam by crushing the Moamarias. An advance guard under Lieutenant MacGregor was sent up the Brahmaputra to Koliabar. Gaurinath himself refused to accompany the troops who were proceeding to fight for him.<sup>2</sup> On his arrival at Koliabar early in November Lieutenant MacGregor met and secured the adherence of three influential Gohains.<sup>3</sup> He recommended that the Bar Barua and the Soladhara Phukan should be treated with 'some degree of severity.'<sup>4</sup> They were arrested and sent to Rangpur.<sup>5</sup> He also sent a letter<sup>6</sup> to Pitambar, Chief of the Moamarias, asking him to attend the assembly of notables summoned by Captain Welsh. Attempts were made to suppress all refractory Chiefs ravaging the districts between Koliabar and Nowgong,<sup>7</sup> but

1 P. C., December 16, 1793, No. 41.

2 P. C., November 22, 1793, No. 63.

3 P. C., December 16, 1793, No. 40, 41.

4 P. C., December 16, 1793, No. 41.

5 Welsh to Shore, November 30, 1793.

6 P. C., December 16, 1793, No. 41.

7 See the proceedings of the Court Martial regarding Din Dayal Naik's failure to arrest Sinduri Hazarika, a leader of the

Captain Welsh did not consider it prudent to adopt 'harsh measures' or to send a detachment 'beyond Koliabar' until the country was perfectly settled.<sup>1</sup>

In the meanwhile a very important change had occurred in Calcutta. Lord Cornwallis left India in October, and Sir John Shore succeeded him in December. We have seen how cautiously the former had tried, in the case of Assam, to obey the declaration of Parliament that 'to pursue schemes of conquest, and extension of dominion in India, are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour and policy of the nation.' We shall see how the latter deliberately withdrew from the complications he had inherited.<sup>2</sup> A distinguished English writer says, "Certainly in the administration of Sir John Shore the neutral policy laid down by parliament and the

Moamarias. (P. C., January 6, 1794, No. 14, 15, 17, 18, 19; January 31, 1794, No. 11, 12).

<sup>1</sup> Welsh to Lieutenant Williams, November 29, 1793. (P. C., January 6, 1794, No. 15).

<sup>2</sup> On January 10, 1794, he wrote to Henry Dundas, President of the Board of Control, "I sincerely regret this Government ever interfered in it, and my present wish is to extricate ourselves from prosecuting our Interposition, as speedily as possible, without discredit, and if it can be effected, with some commercial Benefit."—Furber, *The Private Record of an Indian Governor-Generalship*, p. 35.

Court of Directors received a fair trial.”<sup>1</sup> The application of this policy in the case of Assam is characteristic of that great civil servant, although it had no far-reaching political consequence.

On January 6, 1794, Sir John Shore directed that Captain Welsh should ‘suspend all offensive military operations without further instruction from the Board excepting in case of urgent necessity which does not admit of a reference,’ and formulated certain questions regarding the government and economic conditions of Assam to which the Captain was asked to reply.<sup>2</sup> He replied that Gaurinath would lose whatever authority he had regained as soon as the British troops were withdrawn. It was also pointed out that commercial intercourse between Assam and British India was likely to suffer if the British Government decided not to render military assistance to the King. Captain Welsh was convinced that the inevitable result of the policy of non-intervention would be the renewal of civil strife and the consequent suffering of the people. He recommended that ‘the original form of Government in all its parts should be preserved,’ that ‘the Government of the country should be vested in the aristocracy,’ and that ‘the

1 Roberts, *History of British India*, p. 237.

2 P. C., January 6, 1794, No. 21, 23.

British Government should continue its mediating and controlling influence as the only means of preserving order and tranquillity.<sup>1</sup>

In the meanwhile Captain Welsh had arrived at Koliabar (January, 1794) and Gaurinath had accompanied him. The King had surrendered himself absolutely to his ally. He did not object to the dismissal and deportation<sup>2</sup> of the Bar Barua and the Soladhara Phukan and the appointment of new men in their posts.<sup>3</sup> He wrote conciliatory letters to the three Gohains who were supporting Lieutenant MacGregor.<sup>4</sup> He agreed to restore the Government of Assam to 'its ancient form' by extending the influence of the aristocracy. He made a suitable arrangement for the regular payment of the expenses of the British detachment<sup>5</sup> and requested the Governor-General to authorise Captain Welsh to employ the troops in Assam in whatever manner his ministers and the Captain might judge expedient.<sup>6</sup>

1 P. C., February 24, 1794, No. 13A.

2 To Rangpur (in Bengal).

3 P. C., December 20, 1793, No. 17.

4 P. C., December 16, 1793, No. 41.

5 A sum of Rs. 300,000 was to be paid annually. "Of this sum half was to be collected by the Bar Phukan from the districts under his control, and the other half by the Bar Barua from the rest of the Ahom dominions."

6 P. C., February 24, 1794, No. 15.

This friendly disposition of the King did not, however, last long. He wrote a letter to the Governor-General, complaining bitterly against the activities of Captain Welsh. The deportation of the ministers, the restoration of the Raja of Darrang, the confinement of the King and the interference with his religious observances,<sup>1</sup> the plan to take him to Rangpur, the abolition of the salt monopoly enjoyed by Raush—all these were cited as instances of the Captain's objectionable performances. "This Captain," wrote the King, "will never do anything for my advantage but in every respect will favour my enemy."<sup>2</sup> Some of his ministers wrote a similar letter a few days afterwards, in which they asserted that the consent given by the King to the Captain's proceedings was not voluntary.<sup>3</sup>

Sir John Shore was already inclined to withdraw the detachment from Assam; Gaurinath's letter

1 It is reported in this letter that Captain Welsh wanted to separate the King from his *guru* (spiritual preceptor) and prevented him from washing and saying his prayers.

2 P. C., March 19, 1794, No. 13.

3 P. C., March 31, 1794, No. 34. The ministers observed, "And whatever the Captain is desirous the Raja should acquiesce in, he threatens the Raja in case of his refusal and stops his provisions and prevents his washing and discharging the duties of his religion and shuts the doors upon him. The Raja in consequence being driven to extremity does as the Captain requires."

changed his inclination into resolution.<sup>1</sup> Captain Welsh was 'positively directed to hold himself in readiness for commencing his march from Assam on or before' July 1 next. He was directed to repair to Koliabar 'or any other situation nearer the Company's provinces,' not to proceed to the capital of Assam, and to give up 'all offensive operations whatever'. He was also required 'to withdraw any control that he may have exercised over the internal Government of Assam' and to extend his protection only to those Chiefs who attended the assembly summoned by him. Gaurinath was to be left free to conclude an agreement with the Chiefs; if he failed and wanted to accompany the detachment to Bengal, 'the Company's provinces are open to him as an asylum.' The Chiefs were to be informed 'that it is the resolution of Government not to employ the troops of the Company in the establishment of the sovereignty' of Gaurinath.<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime Lieutenant MacGregor had defeated the Moamarias near Jorhat<sup>3</sup> and Captain Welsh had arrived at Debargaon on March 8, 1794.

1 Sir Edward Gait (*History of Assam*, pp. 207-208) does not refer to this letter.

2 Secretary to Government to Welsh, March 19, 1794. (P. C., March 19, 1794, No: 20).

3 Gait, *History of Assam*, pp. 205-206.



He had not yet received the orders of the Government referred to above; so he continued his preparations for crushing the Moamarias.<sup>1</sup> He wrote a letter to the chief Moamaria leader, Pitambar, asking him to submit to Gaurinath and to assist the British Government in restoring peace and order in Upper Assam.<sup>2</sup> The letter, however, could not be delivered to Pitambar. Lieutenant Irwin was thereupon sent towards Rangpur, to pacify the Moamarias by conciliatory measures, if possible, or to capture the city 'provided his force was equal.' At a distance of about twelve miles from Rangpur he was 'furiously attacked and surrounded' by a large body of the Moamarias. He defeated them and advanced towards a bridge over the Namdang river, about four miles from Rangpur. Here he was joined by Captain Welsh. Rangpur was occupied on March 18 without any opposition, as the Moamarias had already evacuated the city. They had left large quantities of grain, cattle, furniture and treasure.<sup>3</sup> Gaurinath reached his

1 He was aware of the new Governor-General's inclination to the policy of non-intervention. So he assured him that he was anxious to avoid hostilities and to 'settle matters by negotiation.' (Welsh to Shore, March 9, 1794. P. C., March 27, 1794, No. 22).

2 P. C., March 27, 1794, No. 23.

3 The booty was sold; a sum of Rs. 1,17,334 was received and distributed among the troops as prize money. Sir John Shore

capital on March 21.<sup>1</sup> Captain Welsh asked him whether he could dispense with the assistance of British troops. The King and his ministers unanimously declared that the departure of these troops would inevitably result in the revival of anarchy.<sup>2</sup>

The restoration of the King to his capital did not mean the establishment of peace and order in Upper Assam. The Moamarias were not yet crushed;<sup>3</sup> some of the Bengal *Barkandazes* were continuing their depredations in Kamrup. Captain Welsh prevailed upon the King to promise full pardon to all rebels if they offered their submission without delay,<sup>4</sup> but the policy of conciliation had no effect. Lieutenant Crosswell was sent against the *Barkandazes*, whom he succeeded in driving into Bhutan.<sup>5</sup> Then a detachment was sent against the Moamarias at the request of Gaurinath and his ministers. It was reported that many of these rebels were anxious to avail themselves of the King's offer of pardon but were prevented by their 'self-created chiefs.' The

severely censured Captain Welsh for this. (P. C., May 12, 1794, No. 3; May 28, 1794, No. 28, 37).

1 P. C., April 7, 1794, No. 39, 40, 41, 42.

2 P. C., April 7, 1794, No. 41.

3 P. C., May 12, 1794, No. 1.

4 P. C., April 7, 1794, No. 41.

5 P. C., April 7, 1794, No. 42; April 28, 1794, No. 8; May 19, 1794, No. 26, 28.

detachment, however, was recalled as soon as the letter of the Government dated March 19<sup>1</sup> was received.<sup>2</sup>

Captain Welsh decided to wait at Rangpur and forwarded to Calcutta the unanimous request of the King and his ministers that the detachment should not be withdrawn immediately. Nothing was wanting to complete the establishment of the King in his lawful authority but the submission of the Moamaras. Captain Welsh added that it would be very difficult for his troops to leave Assam during the rainy season, for they could not proceed by land owing to the inundated condition of the roads and the Brahmaputra was a dangerous river owing to 'the rapidity of its current and the inclemency of the weather.'<sup>3</sup> But the Government decided that the order of recall was 'founded on principles which are not at all affected by the alteration of circumstances referred to' by Captain Welsh.<sup>4</sup> In the meanwhile the Moamaras had resumed their aggressive attitude. Early in May they crossed the river Dikhu and plundered some

1 See p. 47.

2 P. C., May 12, 1794, No. 1.

3 Welsh to Secretary to Government, April 25, 1794. (P. C., May 12, 1794, No. 2).

4 P. C., May 12, 1794, No. 2.

granaries in Rangpur. Captain Welsh chased them twice and dispersed them.<sup>1</sup>

Fully conscious of the difficulties which he would have to face on the withdrawal of the Company's detachment, Gaurinath repeatedly requested the Governor-General to allow Captain Welsh to continue his work in Assam,<sup>2</sup> but Sir John Shore did not change his policy. So Captain Welsh left Rangpur on May 25 and arrived at Gauhati on May 30. Here a petition was presented to him by some of the local merchants who wanted his protection, but the Government did not authorise him to do anything for them.<sup>3</sup> He left Gauhati on July 1 and proceeded towards Rangpur (in Bengal).<sup>4</sup> The expedition reached British territory on July 3, 1794.

The immediate effect of the Captain's departure was disastrous to the people of Assam. A *vakil* of

1 P. C., May 28, 1794, No. 26; June 2, 1794, No. 21.

2 P. C., June 2, 1794, No. 22, 23, 24; June 13, 1794, No. 7, 12; July 7, 1794, No. 27.

3 P. C., July 7, 1794, N. 23.

Sir Edward Gait (*History of Assam*, p. 209) says that "he was overwhelmed with petitions imploring him to remain from all sorts and conditions of people," but we have found in the Imperial Record Department only one petition from some merchants who seem to have been British subjects trading in Assam.

4 P. C., July 14, 1794, No. 24.

Gaurinath wrote to the Governor-General, ".....his country is nothing but a scene of constant alarm and confusion, the Moamarias having immediately renewed their old practices, making incursions into the country in every direction and plundering and laying waste all before them with the most cruel barbarity, to the utter terror and dismay of his subjects who have forsaken their fields and habitation and betaken themselves to strongholds."<sup>1</sup> Gaurinath was compelled to leave Rangpur, which was constantly threatened by the Moamarias, and established his capital at Jorhat. Rangpur was thereupon occupied by the rebels.<sup>2</sup> Raja Bishnu Narayan, whom Gaurinath had once placed on the *gadi* of Darrang, asserted his claim to the district of Kamrup and requested to be restored to his possessions as a vassal of the Company. His request was not accepted by the Government of Bengal.<sup>3</sup> British subjects trading in Assam suffered so much that an official protest had to be sent to Gaurinath from Calcutta.<sup>4</sup> The Bar Barua, a nominee of Captain Welsh, was dismissed; the Bar Phukan, another nominee of his, was 'barbarously

1 P. C., August 22, 1794, No. 44.

2 Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 209.

3 P. C., October 3, 1794, No. 19.

4 P. C., October 3, 1794, No. 20.

murdered'.<sup>1</sup> Bengal *Barkandazes* renewed their depredations in Assam.<sup>2</sup> It was considered necessary to check their movements; so a notice was issued in the *Calcutta Gazette* that no armed man would be allowed to proceed towards Assam without a passport from the Commissioner of Cooch Behar.<sup>3</sup> Sadiya was taken by the Khamtis. Gaurinath died on December 19, 1794.

We have seen how, from the very beginning, the Government of Bengal had tried to follow a policy of cautious and limited interference in the affairs of Assam. Captain Welsh found himself unable to resist the pressure of events and sought on more than one occasion to proceed further than he was authorised to do. There is no doubt that he would have proved a better ruler to the unhappy people of Assam than their cruel and worthless King; it must, how-

1 Sir Edward Gait (*History of Assam*, p. 209) seems to imply that the murder of the Bar Phukan was an unjustifiable act of cruelty. From a letter written by the Bar Phukan himself to the Governor-General it appears that the former had tried to depose Gaurinath and to enthrone a puppet prince at Gauhati. The Bar Barua was one of his accomplices. Such men surely deserved punishment. (S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages*, Vol. I, *Bengali Letters*, letter no. 53).

2 S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages*, Vol. I, *Bengali Letters*, letter no. 42.

3 P. C., December 19, 1794, No. 41.

ever, be admitted that the assumption of the government by Captain Welsh would have involved the Company so deeply in the turmoils of Assam that sooner or later the story of Oudh would have been repeated on the eastern frontier of British India. No one could imagine in 1794 that Assam would be absorbed by Burma and that, for Bengal, the Burmese would prove to be worse neighbours than the Assamese. Sir Edward Gait says that "but for the intervention of the Burmese, the downfall of the Ahom Dynasty might have been considerably delayed".<sup>1</sup> If Lord Cornwallis and Sir John Shore refused to increase the burden of the Company by hastening that downfall, we must seek for the justification of their policy in the attitude of the authorities in England<sup>2</sup> no less than in the critical situation which they had to face in other parts of India.<sup>3</sup>

1 *History of Assam*, p. 210.

2 See p. 43.

3 Captain Welsh was sent to Assam within six months of the conclusion of peace with Tipu Sultan. During his stay in Assam the Marathas and the Nizam were sharpening their swords in anticipation of a contest which came in March, 1795 (Battle of Kharda).

## CHAPTER II

### DISPUTES ON THE ARAKAN FRONTIER

(1785-1795)

Towards the middle of the eighteenth century a new royal dynasty was established in Burma by Alaungpaya (1752-1760), who crushed the Talaings of the Delta and carried his depredations to Manipur in the west and Siam in the south-east. His relations with the English East India Company were not very friendly. The Company had occupied Negrais in 1753, and Alaungpaya recognised this occupation by a formal treaty in 1757. The increasing political complications in India led to the evacuation of the island in May, 1759. In the following October a few servants of the Company were sent to Negrais to retain a lien on the island, but they were treacherously murdered by the Burmese, who suspected that the English Company was intriguing with the Talaings.<sup>1</sup>

Alaungpaya was succeeded by his eldest son, Naungdawgyi, who occupied the throne for three years only (1760-1763). He was visited in September, 1760, by an English envoy named Captain Alves. The King said "he was surprised to think how the

1 Harvey, *History of Burma*, pp. 219-243, 354-355.



Governor of Madras<sup>1</sup> ... could have the face to demand any satisfaction, which he would not give, for ... he looked on all that were killed at Negrais, whether guilty or innocent, as born to die there''.<sup>2</sup> Later on he relented, released the half dozen English captives, mostly survivors of the massacre, gave full liberty to trade, and signified his willingness to grant commercial sites anywhere in return for arms and ammunition. It appeared, however, that trade was no longer to be duty free, as under the treaty of 1757, and that the head-quarters of the Company must be transferred from Negrais to Bassein. The King wanted to keep the English at a place where he could easily control them; Negrais was too remote and beyond his effective authority. Bassein, however, was too far from the sea<sup>3</sup> to be a convenient centre for the English merchants. They preferred Rangoon.<sup>4</sup>

It was the conquest of Arakan<sup>5</sup> in 1784-1785 by King Bodawpaya<sup>6</sup> (1782-1819) that marked a new era

1 In those days the Company's factories in Burma lay within the jurisdiction of the Madras Presidency.

2 Alves' report, quoted in Harvey, *History of Burma*, p. 244.

3 About 70 miles.

4 Harvey, *History of Burma*, pp. 244-246.

5 For the Burmese version see *Konbaungset Yazawin*, Vol. II, pp. 1-17.

6 The youngest son of Alaungpaya.

in the history of Anglo-Burmese relations. For many centuries Arakan had been an independent kingdom, and its political and cultural relations with Bengal had been very intimate.<sup>1</sup> The Arakanese were known in Bengal as *Mags*. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the *Mags* had plundered and devastated<sup>2</sup> large portions of southern and eastern Bengal, specially the modern districts of Backergunge,<sup>3</sup> Noakhali (including the island of Sandwip), Dacca and Khulna. Even the distant district of Murshidabad did not escape the terror created by the *Mags*, whose swift boats easily ran into any river or creek in the Bengal delta. For about two centuries Chitagong was governed from Arakan.<sup>4</sup> The rulers of the Tipperah State were now and then tributary vassals of the Kings of Arakan. The fury of the raids continued almost unabated during the first half of the

1 See Harvey, *History of Burma*, pp. 137-140, and *Bengali Literature in the court of Arakan* (a Bengali work) by E. Huq and A. Karim.

2 See the account of Shihabuddin Talish in Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, Vol. III, pp. 224f., and *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1907, pp. 422 f.

3 In Rennell's map of Bengal, published in 1794, the area south of Backergunge is marked: "Deserted on account of the ravages of the Mugs."

4 It was conquered by Shayista Khan, the Mughal Viceroy of Bengal, in 1666.

eighteenth century. In a single month (February, 1727) the *Mags* carried off 1,800 captives from the southern parts of Bengal.<sup>1</sup> During the administration of Warren Hastings the Company had to take defensive measures for the protection of its subjects: "Efforts were made to repress them (i.e., the *Mags*) by means of the troops at Dacca and Chittagong,<sup>2</sup> with the assistance of armed boats from Dacca, and a cruiser on the coast of Arracan. The government also proposed a plan for making reprisals on the country of the Muggs, in the hope that, at all events, it would deter them for a time from repeating their invasion."<sup>3</sup>

The problem assumed a different character after the Burmese conquest of Arakan. The victorious Burmese army returned to Ava in February, 1785, with some members of the royal family<sup>4</sup> and 20,000 inhabitants as prisoners. Arakan was constituted a province of the Burmese Empire and placed under a

<sup>1</sup> Harvey, *History of Burma*, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> The Company acquired Zamindari rights in the district of Chittagong by a treaty with Nawab Mir Kasim, dated September 27, 1760.

<sup>3</sup> Auber, *Rise and Progress of the British Power in India*, 1837, Vol. I, p. 568.

<sup>4</sup> The King himself, Thamada, was carried to Ava as a prisoner.

Burmese Governor who resided at Mrohaung.<sup>1</sup> The city of Sandoway and the islands of Ramree and Cheduba were constituted sub-provinces.<sup>2</sup> The *Mags*, who had so long oppressed the people of Bengal, now became victims of Burmese cruelty.<sup>3</sup> Some of them crossed the river Naf, the boundary between Arakan and the British district of Chittagong, and took refuge in the Company's territory. They were accepted as British subjects, and

1 It was the capital of the Kings of Arakan during the period 1433-1785.

2 Harvey, *History of Burma*, pp. 267-268. This is why we often come across the expression "the four provinces of Arakan" in Burmese works and English documents.

3 Colonel Erskine wrote to the Commander-in-Chief on April 5, 1794, that the subjugation of Arakan by the Burmese was "a happy event, for the Mugs were a set of pirates and had no idea of public or private faith; they committed depredations upon all their neighbours with uncommon cruelty ...." (P. C., April 25, 1794, No. 14). On another occasion he expressed a different view: "That the Burmahs have been guilty of shocking cruelty and oppression to the conquered, I have not ... the smallest doubt ... thousands of men, women and children have been slaughtered in cold blood ..." (P. C., November 10, 1794, No. 41). Apolung said that nearly two lakhs of men, women and children had been killed, the same number had been carried off to Burma as slaves, and those who had taken shelter in hills and forests were either captured by Burmese troops or killed by tigers. (P. C., October 10, 1794, No. 45).

some of them were provided with waste land for cultivation.<sup>1</sup>

The Burmese naturally resented the emigration of their subjects. In 1786 a Burmese army crossed the Naf in pursuit of a *Mag sardar* who had found shelter in British territory. A British officer named Major Ellerker was sent with some troops to protect the frontier. The *Mag sardar* was shot by the Burmese on the northern bank of the Naf (i.e., within British territory), but no hostile step was taken by Major Ellerker. The Burmese army returned to Arakan. In 1787 another *Mag sardar* fled from Arakan, but he was captured by the Burmese at the mouth of the Naf. On this occasion presents were interchanged as testimony of friendship between the Magistrate of Chittagong and the Burmese.<sup>2</sup>

Ever since the days of Alaungpaya the Burmese had been trying to conquer Siam. The conquest of Arakan encouraged them. A grand expedition proceeded to the south in 1786, led by the King himself.<sup>3</sup> The Governor of Arakan was ordered to send large

1 P. C., February 10, 1794, No. 16.

2 P. C., April 25, 1794, No. 14.

3 Harvey, *History of Burma*, pp. 270-271. The expedition did not succeed. The King left his soldiers to their fate and fled for his life to Rangoon.

supplies of men, money and rice.<sup>1</sup> The measures adopted by him for collecting these supplies were so oppressive that in 1791 the Arakanese determined to resist. They took up arms<sup>2</sup> and nominated as their commander a descendent of their former King. The rebels killed some Burmese troops and compelled others to take refuge in a fort. They were assisted by a *Mag sardar* who had left Arakan before the Burmese conquest and obtained from the Magistrate of Chittagong a plot of rent-free land near the Arakan frontier. The Burmese crushed the rebellion as soon as reinforcements arrived from Ava. The leaders of the rebellion fled to Chittagong and received a village. The Burmese do not appear to have taken any step to pursue them within the British frontier.<sup>3</sup>

In 1792 some Muhammadans of Chittagong crossed the Naf and obtained some plots of land from the Governor of Arakan. They purchased 800 bullocks and 95 buffaloes under the pretence of employing them in cultivation. At the end of the year, however, they returned to Chittagong with the animals. The Governor of Arakan complained to the Magistrate of Chittagong, who realised the sum of

1 P. C., August 11, 1794, No. 11.

2 P. C., April 14, 1794, No. 14.

3 P. C., April 25, 1794, No. 14.

one thousand rupees from the offenders and sent the money to the Governor as compensation.<sup>1</sup>

No more trouble took place on the frontier till the beginning of the year 1794. In January<sup>2</sup> a Burmese army crossed the Naf and demanded the surrender of a *Mag sardar* named Lahomorang. This *sardar* had emigrated to Chittagong soon after the Burmese conquest of Arakan and received from the Magistrate some plots of waste land for cultivation. Colebrooke, Magistrate of Chittagong, reported to the Governor-General on February 3, 1794, that the object of the Burmese army was 'to seize or enforce the surrender of men whom Government has long considered as its own subjects.'<sup>3</sup>

In his letter to the Magistrate of Chittagong the Governor of Arakan complained that his revenue had suffered owing to the flight of 3,500 men under the leadership of Lohomorang, and requested him to deliver them to his army. The Burmese did not understand the significance of crossing, without permission, the boundary of a friendly State. The Governor of Ramree, who was the leader of the Burmese invading army, wrote to the British officer

1 P. C., April 25, 1794, No. 14.

2 P. C., March 27, 1794, No. 31.

3 P. C., February 10, 1794, No. 16.

stationed at Ramu<sup>1</sup> that his followers "have not plundered the effects of any people in this country nor touched one article."<sup>2</sup> Apparently he knew nothing about the offence known to International Law as violation of territory.<sup>3</sup> He demanded the surrender of some fugitives on a new ground; it was asserted that some of them, under the leadership of a *Mag sardar* named Apolung, had plundered one of the Burmese King's ships and settled at Mahiskhali within the limits of Chittagong.<sup>4</sup>

The immediate issue before the British authorities was simple. They could not allow the Burmese to violate their territory with impunity. The Burmese must be compelled to leave British territory before the question of surrendering the fugitives could be taken up for discussion. Captain Rayne, Officer Commanding British troops at Chittagong, detached

1 A frontier post in the Chittagong district, not far from the Arakan border.

2 P. C., February 10, 1794, No. 17. This claim was true. (P. C., February 17, 1794, No. 12, 13; March 3, 1794, No. 13). The local people fled when they heard of the Burmese advance, but the Burmese 'paid liberally for every article of which they found the owner'. (P. C., March 14, 1794, No. 30).

3 Sometime later he wrote, "... no damage arises to your country from my remaining in the forts which I have erected." (P. C., March 7, 1794, No. 20).

4 P. C., February 17, 1794, No. 14.



Lieutenant Lyons to expel the Burmese from British territory. He marched a few miles from Ramu, camped at Ratnapullung, and reported<sup>1</sup> that a stronger force would be necessary 'to do anything effectual against them.' Captain Rayne then sent Lieutenants Watherstone and Hunt, with artillery and a company of sepoy,<sup>2</sup> to join the force at Ramu. It was reported that the Burmese army, about 5,000 strong and armed with French muskets, had erected four small forts made of wood and bamboos.<sup>3</sup> But the Burmese disclaimed all hostile intentions; the Governor of Ramree was prepared to proceed to Chittagong to carry on negotiations.<sup>4</sup> So the British troops were instructed by Captain Rayne 'on no account to cross the boundary or pursue them beyond it.'<sup>5</sup>

These measures were adopted by the civil and military officers at Chittagong on their own responsibility. When their proceedings were reported to Calcutta, Sir John Shote and Sir Robert Abercromby<sup>6</sup>

1 P. C., February 17, 1794, No. 13.

2 A private vessel, the *Charlotte*, was chartered to transport the artillery and the sepoy, as the land route was covered with hills and jungles. (P. C., February 17, 1794, No. 12, 13).

3 P. C., February 17, 1794, No. 12.

4 P. C., February 17, 1794, No. 14.

5 P. C., February 17, 1794, No. 15.

6 Commander-in-Chief.

took a serious view of the situation<sup>1</sup> and decided to send Lieutenant-Colonel Erskine to take command of the troops at Chittagong.<sup>2</sup> Re-inforcements were sent from Calcutta, and Colebrooke was authorised to summon troops from Dacca in case of necessity. If the Burmese army refused to evacuate British territory within a reasonable time, they were to be expelled by force.<sup>3</sup> The Magistrate of Dacca was ordered to 'lay an embargo on all Arracan trading boats that are now at Dacca or may arrive there during the continuance of the Burmah Troops on the Borders of Chittagong.'<sup>4</sup>

On February 18 Colebrooke sent letters to the Viceroy of Pegu,<sup>5</sup> the Governor of Arakan and the Governor of Ramree, requesting them to evacuate British territory at once.<sup>6</sup> At the same time arrangements were completed for the adoption of hostile

1 Sir John Shore wrote to Henry Dundas, President of the Board of Control, on March 10, 1794, " ... the Pegu Government means to enforce, as far as it can, the Requisition which it has made; you will I hope find our reply just, moderate and firm..." (Furber, *The Private Record of an Indian Governor-Generalship*, p. 50).

2 P. C., February 17, 1794, No. 16.

3 P. C., February 17, 1794, No. 17.

4 P. C., February 17, 1794, No. 19.

5 The usual channel of communications between the British and Burmese Governments.

6 P. C., March 11, 1794, No. 11.

measures. The Burmese army was superior in number to the British troops sent to the frontier. Their stockades were strong. The territory lying between Ramu and the Naf was covered by hills and jungles. It was extremely difficult to carry provisions and guns through so difficult a tract of land. The difficulty of transport was removed to some extent by the *Charlotte*.<sup>1</sup> Colebrooke was glad to receive authority to summon troops from Dacca.<sup>2</sup> Captain Rayne requested the Magistrate of Tipperah to send to Chittagong all troops stationed at Comilla,<sup>3</sup> but the Magistrate regretted his inability to do so, as the local treasury and jail required a strong guard.<sup>4</sup> Later on, however, he complied with Captain Rayne's request.<sup>5</sup>

Colebrooke received on February 26 a reply to his letter to the Governor of Ramree.<sup>6</sup> A new offence was now attributed to the fugitives. It was alleged that some of them, including Apolung, were 'informers

1 P. C., March 3, 1794, No. 15, 16. See p. 64 for the *Charlotte*.

2 P. C., March 11, 1794, No. 11.

3 P. C., March 3, 1794, No. 19. Comilla is the head-quarter of the Tipperah district.

4 P. C., March 3, 1794, No. 18.

5 P. C., March 14, 1794, No. 30.

6 P. C., March 7, 1794, No. 19.

and incendiaries': "They carry to Chittagong the stories of Arracan and to Arracan the stories of Chittagong." The old charge of robbery was repeated, and it was clearly stated that the Burmese army would not retreat beyond the British frontier without Apolung.<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Erskine arrived at Chittagong on March 4.<sup>2</sup> He was instructed 'to repel the invaders and oblige them to re-pass the frontier and retire from the Company's territories as soon as you have collected a force sufficient for the purpose.'<sup>3</sup> He accepted Colebrooke's suggestion<sup>4</sup> that no more time should be spent in fruitless negotiations with the Burmese army. It was, said he, "highly impolitic to permit them to hold with an armed force the smallest spot in the Company's territories, as it must create in their minds the supposition of our not being prepared to resist a sudden attack, and may in future from that circumstance lead them to more offensive acts of hostility." He decided to proceed to Ramu at once and to collect the force under his command, so that he might 'instantly lead it to the first point driving

1 P. C., March 7, 1794, No. 20.

2 P. C., March 14, 1794, No. 29.

3 P. C., March 7, 1794, No. 31.

4 P. C., March 14, 1794, No. 30.

them out of the Company's provinces.'<sup>1</sup> He arrived at Ramu on March 10. He found that the Burmese army was about 8,000 strong. They had erected six stockades. He felt that the force at his command was not strong enough to drive them away across the Naf, a distance of about fifty miles. So he decided to wait, 'although, with much reluctance and impatience,' till the arrival of additional troops.<sup>2</sup>

At Ramu Colonel Erskine was requested by the Governor of Ramree to send a reliable person to whom the Burmese point of view might be explained. A man who knew the Arakanese language was accordingly despatched to the Burmese camp. The Governor of Ramree declared again and again that he had no intention to provoke hostilities. He said that his letters to the British officers were misinterpreted by the Arakanese, 'who were hereditary enemies to the Burmese.' He gave an assurance that the Burmese Government did not demand the surrender of those *Mags* who had settled in British territory and were regarded as British subjects. Nor, said he, did his King object to the peaceful emigration of the *Mags* from Arakan. But he expected that British authorities would not extend their protection to 'traitors and

1. P. C., March 14, 1794, No. 31.

2. P. C., March 27, 1794, No. 24.

assassins.' His advance towards Ramu was to be 'entirely attributed to his ignorance of the boundary and of the laws and customs of European Governments.' He humbly described himself as 'a poor man who had a boon to request and who from ignorance had crossed the threshold instead of waiting at the door.'<sup>1</sup>

The conciliatory attitude adopted by the Governor of Ramree satisfied Colonel Erskine; he regarded him 'as an object of compassion rather than worthy of the chastisement of Government.' He sent Lieutenant Frazer to request him to cross the Naf, with an assurance that "any well-grounded complaint would be attended to by our Government as soon as he had evacuated the Company's province."<sup>2</sup> In his conversation with Lieutenant Frazer the Governor of Ramree said that he was held by his King personally responsible for the capture of Apolung, and that, if he failed in his attempt, "not only my own life but the lives of all my kindred and relations, male and female, will become forfeited to our just though severe laws." Lieutenant Frazer was impressed with his sincerity.<sup>3</sup>

1 P. C., March 27, 1794, No. 27.

2 P. C., March 27, 1794, No. 27.

3 P. C., March 27, 1794, No. 28.

At this stage it is necessary to refer to the incidents which led to the Burmese demand for the surrender of Apolung. This *sardar* and his associates had taken the oath of allegiance to the King of Ava, the oath being administered by the Governor of Ramree. They were given possession of the Broken Islands, for which they paid an annual tribute of bees' wax and elephants. For three years Apolung and his associates remained true to their obligations; but in September, 1793, they plundered some boats belonging to the Burmese Government. A few days later they seized a boat sent by the King of Burma to purchase clothes in Calcutta. The Governor of Ramree sent a man to protest against these depredations. This man was put to death by Apolung. "The conduct of these *sardars*," reported Colonel Erskine, "from the period of their attacking the Government fleet seems to have been uncommonly licentious<sup>1</sup> until they were driven from the islands by the Burmese, when they took refuge in the Hon'ble Company's province ... ."<sup>2</sup> Some enemies of the Governor of Ramree reported to the King of Burma that he had 'connived at their villainy and received part of

1 This statement was supported by reports received by Colebrooke from Arakan merchants. (P. C., March 27, 1794, No. 31).

2 P. C., March 27, 1794, No. 24.

the plunder.' The King declared that nothing could convince him of the Governor's innocence but 'the persons or heads of the traitors.'<sup>1</sup> The unfortunate Governor was thus compelled to advance to the British frontier.

After Lieutenant Frazer's return from the Burmese camp Colonel Erskine received a letter from the Governor of Ramree, asking for 'the space of 20 days for an answer from the King of Ava.' He was very anxious to avoid open war. "We mean no harm," said he, "and to comply with your orders as near as is consistent to the saving of our lives, we will, if required, send all our guns and half of our troops the other side of the Naff and all of us follow in twenty days."<sup>2</sup> Colonel Erskine was authorised by the Government to accept this proposal and to inform the Governor of Ramree that the Magistrate of Chittagong would "apprehend and secure the persons stated to have committed depredations in Arracan with a view to strict enquiry into any specific charges that may be hereafter brought against them."<sup>3</sup>

In an elaborate report sent to Calcutta on March

1 P. C., March 27, 1794, No. 28.

2 P. C., March 27, 1794, No. 29.

3 P. C., March 27, 1794, No. 30.



19 Colebrooke submitted that, although the Burmese army had advanced 'not more than 6 to 10 miles' within British territory, yet it was clear that its conduct was not 'intentionally hostile towards the English.' The commercial intercourse between Arakan and Chittagong was not interrupted. The obstinate resolution of the Governor of Ramree to get hold of the fugitives was "merely dictated by the necessity under which he conceives himself of executing his orders where his own head and the heads of all his family will be the penalty of failure." Colebrooke concluded, "His total inaction in the line of offence compared with his obstinacy in refusing to retreat would further strengthen this opinion by proving that, if possible, he apprehends less the consequences of provoking hostilities with the English Government than of incurring the displeasure of his own monarch."<sup>1</sup>

Sir John Shore was now convinced that the apparently aggressive attitude of the Burmese "was not owing to designed hostilities and may fairly be imputed to erroneous and mistaken motives." Under the circumstances he was not prepared to prejudice the commercial interests of the Company by precipitating the outbreak of war. Colonel Erskine was

1 P. C., March 27, 1794, No. 31.

instructed to inform the Governor of Ramree that the Government of Bengal would not demand any 'compensation or satisfaction' for the violation of British territory, and that the Burmese authorities were expected to assist the enquiry about the conduct of the fugitives which would be held by the Magistrate of Chittagong.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the close of March the Burmese army crossed the Naf and evacuated British territory. Colonel Erskine found no reason to take exception to the conduct of the Governor of Ramree. The Burmese had remained peaceful even when two of them had been killed by the party under Lieutenant Lyons before Colonel Erskine's arrival at Ramu. The erection of stockades in British territory was quite in accordance with Burmese custom. As Colonel Erskine reported: "It is their custom to fortify every time they move as the ancient Romans did." The gallant officer fully sympathised with the cruel dilemma in which the Governor of Ramree found himself: "The Burmah laws ... are like the laws of Draco wrote in blood. If any person turns his back in the day of battle, the whole of his relations, male and female, lose their lives."<sup>2</sup>

1 P. C., April 7, 1794, No. 33, 34.

2 P. C., April 7, 1794, No. 37.

The retreat of the Burmese army prepared the ground for the enquiry. The Governor of Ramree at first agreed to co-operate with the British authorities, and even to come to Chittagong with the evidence collected by him. He requested Colonel Erskine to expedite the matter, as the approach of the rainy season would make it difficult for both English and Burmese troops to remain encamped in a jungly and unhealthy country.<sup>1</sup> But by the middle of May it appeared that the Burmese had no intention of taking part in the enquiry. It was reported that the Governors of Ramree and Cheduba had been summoned by the King to Ava, where both of them were likely to lose their heads. The newly appointed Governor of Arakan, who was a near relative of the King and his first counsellor, was unwilling to commit himself until he was favoured with instructions from the capital.<sup>2</sup> The result was the complete cessation of intercourse between Colonel Erskine and the Burmese authorities.<sup>3</sup>

Sometime latter Colonel Erskine received a letter from the Governor of Arakan, who asserted that the English officers had promised to surrender Apolung, and demanded the fulfilment of that promise,

1 P. C., May 2, 1794, No. 18.

2 P. C., June 13, 1794, No. 6.

3 P. C., July 18, 1794, No. 19.

Colonel Erskine replied that no such promise had been made by any English officer. He requested the Governor to assist the enquiry by supplying evidence against the fugitives, as "it is not the custom of the English to deliver up men without a trial."<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the non-co-operation of the Burmese authorities Colonel Erskine succeeded in procuring some details about the treacherous conduct of Apolung. It appears that in July, 1793, one of the King's ministers arrived at Arakan to demand paddy to be delivered at Rangoon for the use of the army in Siam. Apolung agreed to furnish some soldiers, instead of paddy, as he 'inhabited in woody country which did not admit of the cultivation of paddy.' In November, 1793, Apolung was asked to fulfil this agreement. He replied by killing the minister's messengers. Then he plundered some Government boats. The Governor of Ramree tried to capture him, but he plundered one of the King's boats and went from one village to another, burning and destroying them. When Arakan became too hot for him he fled to Chittagong with his followers.<sup>2</sup>

These details were forwarded to Calcutta. The Governor-General in Council came to the conclusion

1 P. C., August 11, 1794, No. 10.

2 P. C., August 11, 1794, No. 11.

that, if these allegations were substantiated by reliable evidence, there could be "no hesitation to surrender Apolung to the justice of his own monarch, as it cannot be the interest of any Power to protect a murderer and plunderer." It was felt, however, that there was a "possibility of either the innocence of Apolung and others or their having been driven by cruelty and tyranny into resistance and retaliation." Colonel Erskine was, therefore, directed to call on Apolung for an answer to the charges brought against him and to keep him under arrest till the conclusion of the enquiry.<sup>1</sup>

In October Colonel Erskine received a letter<sup>2</sup> from the Governor of Arakan, who now appeared to be 'more interested in the encouragement of commerce than solicitious in what relates to the fugitives'.<sup>3</sup> Apolung denied the truth of the charges brought against him. He said that five followers of his, including his nephew, were murdered in cold blood by the Governor of Arakan. He himself was attacked, but he succeeded in escaping to Chittagong. He

1 P. C., August 11, 1794, No. 12.

2 P. C., November 10, 1794, No. 44. The Governor wrote: ".....These two nations are one. Let not, therefore, the gold and silver road of commerce be shut up, but let the merchants pass and re-pass as formely."

3 P. C., November 10, 1794, No. 41.

agreed that he had taken the oath of allegiance to the King of Ava, but the Burmese Governor killed his wife and son-in-law and some of his followers. He had never plundered Government boats or burnt villages; on the other hand, he had presented to the Government one *maund* of elephants' teeth as contribution for the expenses of the war with Siam.<sup>1</sup> It was obviously difficult to decide whether Apolung was more truthful than his enemies. Colonel Erskine recommended that, if no evidence was forthcoming from Arakan, the fugitives (who had been arrested in the meanwhile) should be liberated.<sup>2</sup> Sir John Shore also found it impossible to come to any definite decision about the question of Apolung's guilt. He concluded that it would be 'impolitic and unjust' to surrender him until more satisfactory evidence was available. Colonel Erskine was authorised to 'liberate him from personal restraint upon condition of giving good security to appear when required.'<sup>3</sup>

Towards the close of November Colonel Erskine received a letter from the Governor of Arakan, saying that the Governor of Cheduba was proceeding to the Naf with satisfactory evidence about Apolung's

1 P. C., October 10, 1794, No. 45.

2 P. C., November 10, 1794, No. 41.

3 P. C., November 10, 1794, No. 46.

guilt.<sup>1</sup> Colonel Erskine encamped on the bank of the Naf on December 1, taking the fugitives along with him. A few days later the Governor of Cheduba informed him that the evidence was not ready and he did not know when he could cross the river. Colonel Erskine naturally concluded that the Burmese were 'trifling' with him and decided to return to Ramu.<sup>2</sup> But the Burmese soon changed their tactics. In January, 1795, the Governor of Cheduba co-operated with Colonel Erskine in the enquiry. The evidence was not satisfactory, and Colonel Erskine concluded that "the principal parts of the accusation have not been substantiated."<sup>3</sup> The Governor-General in Council decided that, although the evidence was 'insufficient for the conviction and punishment' of the fugitives, there was "strong presumptive proof of their having been guilty of the crimes imputed to them." As these crimes were committed within Burmese territory by Burmese subjects, it was decided that the fugitives should be delivered up for trial before the officers of that Government. The Governor-General was desired to request the King of Burma to "order a full and impartial investigation

1 P. C., December 5, 1794, No. 39.

2 P. C., December 22, 1794, No. 10.

3 P. C., February 6, 1795, No. 21.

of their conduct previous to giving any authority for their punishment."<sup>1</sup>

No objection can be taken to the final decision of the Government of Bengal on political and legal grounds. There is no doubt that there was 'strong presumptive proof' of Apolung's guilt; the testimony of some Arakan merchants, recorded by Colonel Erskine<sup>2</sup> and Colebrooke,<sup>3</sup> was clearly against him. It was also beyond doubt that Apolung had taken shelter in British territory after committing the crimes imputed to him. He was undoubtedly a subject of the Burmese King. His country had been conquered and permanently annexed to Burma, and he himself had taken an oath of allegiance to the new ruler. He was not a political offender:<sup>4</sup> he was not fighting to make his country free. Under the circumstances it was the duty of the British authorities to surrender him.<sup>5</sup> Sir John Shore did his best for the unfortunate victim of Burmese cruelty by requesting the Burmese

1 P. C., February 6, 1795, No. 21.

2 P. C., November 10, 1794, No. 41.

3 P. C., March 27, 1704, No. 31.

4 The custom of refusing extradition for political offenders was not generally accepted in Europe before the nineteenth century.

5 "The opinion that prevailed both in Chittagong and at Ava was, that the refugees were given up from fear....." (*Edinburgh Journal of Science*, October, 1825).



King to give him a fair trial. It is not difficult to imagine the effect of this request on the court of Ava. One of Apolung's associates made his escape on the way to Amarapura; Apolung and the other fugitive suffered a lingering and cruel death.<sup>1</sup> The Governor of Arakan tried, soon after the surrender of Apolung, to get hold of the wives and children of the fugitives, by demanding their surrender. This demand Colonel Erskine refused, with the support of the Government, to comply with.<sup>2</sup> It appears that in preferring this demand the Governor acted on his own initiative, and that it was not authorised by the King or the ministers.<sup>3</sup> Two guns and three boats belonging to the Burmese King had been carried off by Apolung. These were restored by Colonel Erskine on the demand of the Governor of Arakan.<sup>4</sup>

There are certain aspects of Burmese policy which demand a more satisfactory explanation than we are at present able to offer. Why did the Burmese give up their demand for Lahomorang? Why did they not mention the name of Apolung at the begin-

1 Report of Captain Symes. (P. C., January 23, 1797, No. 26).

2 P. C., May 22, 1795, No. 99, 101.

3 Report of Captain Symes. (P. C., January 23, 1797, No. 26).

4 P. C., May 22, 1795, No. 99.

ning? Why did the Governor of Ramree evacuate British territory without securing the fugitives? Why did the Governor of Arakan appear to be more anxious for the prosperity of trade than the capture of the 'traitors'? British records provide no satisfactory answer to these questions. Unfortunately we are quite in the dark about the Burmese view of the whole affair. The *Konbaungset Yazawin* does not refer to it at all.

The protracted negotiations regarding the Burmese demand for the surrender of the fugitives drew the attention of the Government of Bengal to the unsatisfactory condition of the frontier between Chittagong and Arakan. The river Naf was the official boundary, but even a responsible Burmese official like the Governor of Ramree did not know (or pretended not to know) it. The most important post within British jurisdiction beyond the town of Chittagong was Ramu, about 25 miles from the sea. A navigable rivulet passed by this post; it was computed that boats carrying 600 *maunds* of rice could proceed through this stream from Chittagong to Ramu. The land route was difficult; heavy loads and guns could hardly be sent by land from Chittagong to Ramu.<sup>1</sup> The territory lying between Ramu and the Naf was covered by hills and jungles and inter-

1 P. C., February 17, 1794, No. 13.

sected by rivulets. The ground was so low and flat that it was completely inundated during the rains. The troops took an hour to march one mile. Only a few *bighas* of land were under cultivation. There were no shops, and no provisions were available. "There was no military post beyond Ramu; the intermediate tract of land seems to have been considered neutral ground."<sup>1</sup> The whole region was in 'a perfect state of wilderness.'<sup>2</sup>

This wild region was inhabited by about 5,000 *Mags*, exclusive of women and children. They "earned a bare subsistence chiefly by fishing, labouring in the woods, and partial employment amongst the Mussulman Zemindars, few or none of them possessing lands of any extent. They carried on an insignificant barter, exchanging dried fish, honey, bees' wax and coarse cloth....." They were active, industrious, mild and docile. Women took part in the manufacture of cloth. It was expected that "if the Mugs were encouraged in agriculture, the emigration from Arracan would be prodigious."<sup>3</sup>

"The state of this frontier," observed a military officer after local inspection, "by being covered with

1. Colonel Erskine's report.

2. P. C., March 3, 1794, No. 15; March 27, 1794, No. 31; April 7, 1794, No. 37, 38; April 25, 1794, No. 14; January 9, 1795, No. 47.

3. P. C., January 9, 1795, No. 47.

jungle, is peculiarly well adapted to the desultory inroads of our neighbours, and while it remains so, they may lie concealed, make sudden irruptions, and retire with impunity."<sup>1</sup> It was difficult to fathom the real intentions of the Burmese Government. Although the Governors of Arakan and Ramree repudiated hostile designs, a large number of Burmese troops arrived at the frontier in January, 1795, when the enquiry against Apolung was coming to a close.<sup>2</sup> Nobody knew the mind of King Bodawpaya, cruel, proud and ambitious. It is said that soon after the conquest of Arakan he decided to invade Bengal. A council was summoned to deliberate upon the project. A native of Bengal, who then resided at Ava, was asked to say whether, in his opinion, the Burmese would be able to defeat the British army. He unwisely replied in the negative and lost his head, but the King gave up the project. Any accident might lead to its revival. 'Nor was the King of Burma an enemy to be neglected. Colonel Erskine remarked, ".....although the troops of the King of Ava are at present despicable in point of discipline, yet when we are unprepared or engaged in another quarter, they have it in their power to give us much trouble."<sup>3</sup>

1 P. C., January 9, 1795, No. 47.

2 P. C., February 6, 1795, No. 21.

3 P. C., November 10, 1794, No. 41.

It was obviously necessary to put the frontier in a defensible position. The battalions at Chittagong and Dacca were too weak and dispersed for *mufussil* duties to be available in any sudden emergency. Colonel Erskine suggested that one 'effective' battalion should always be stationed at or near Ramu, ready to act at a moment's warning.<sup>1</sup> This measure would "not only impress the natives with confidence, preserve peace and order in the interior districts, but compel the Burmahs to relinquish their predatory habits and thereby give stability to the Company's possessions in that quarter."<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately effect was not given to these suggestions by the Government. Sir John Shore wrote to the President of the Board of Control,<sup>3</sup> "The Pegu Government is powerful, but it can never send any army of consequence into the Company's territories....."<sup>4</sup>

1 P. C., November 10, 1794, No. 41.

2 P. C., January 9, 1795, No. 47.

3 Henry Dundas.

4 Letter dated March 10, 1794. Furber, *The Private Record of an Indian Governor-Generalskip*, p. 50.

## CHAPTER III

### COMMERCIAL MISSIONS TO BURMA (1795-1798)

The incidents narrated in the previous chapter led Sir John Shore to the conclusion that it was necessary to place Anglo-Burmese political and commercial relations on a more regular footing. With a view to establish direct intercourse between Calcutta and Ava he asked for a report from Captain Michael Symes, 'who had directed his researches very particularly to the little known countries and constitution of Arracan and Ava.' Captain Symes referred the Governor-General to the story of Sorel's mission to Burma during the administration of Lord Cornwallis. It appears that the pressing necessity of finding ships to transport troops to Siam had compelled the Burmese King 'to order an indiscriminate embargo to be laid on all vessels in the Rangoon river.' He asked his officers in Rangoon to grant an adequate compensation to those owners of ships who might suffer as a result of this order, but this part of the King's order was not obeyed. Some European ship-owners, whose ships had been seized by the Burmese officers in Rangoon, complained to Lord Cornwallis. He was

not prepared to send an official Agent to Ava, for he was afraid that such a representative might be 'exposed to personal insult in his public capacity;' so he decided to send a 'half-official letter' through one Mr. Sorel. After some troubles at Rangoon Sorel arrived at Ava, where he was given a flattering reception. He received the King's reply, which was understood to be conciliatory. Unfortunately Sorel suffered a ship-wreck during his return journey. His life was saved, but the letter was lost. From this narrative Sir John Shore concluded that "the King of Ava would most readily receive a deputation from this Government and treat its delegate with every possible respect and attention."<sup>1</sup>

According to Captain Symes, British trade in Burma suffered from two reasons. In the first place, British merchants in Rangoon were oppressed by the *Shah Bunder* or Port Master. Burmese Kings usually appointed Europeans to this important office, because they were expected to be better acquainted than the Burmese with the customs of British merchants. Unfortunately these European Port Masters abused their position, and, in co-operation with the chief Magistrate of Rangoon, compelled the merchants to submit to various illegal impositions.<sup>2</sup> No complaint

1 P. C., November 10, 1794, No. 46.

2 This charge seems to have been exaggerated. Sir John

was allowed to reach Ava. Secondly, the officers of the Burmese Government discouraged the introduction of European and Indian articles into their country. The people wanted to get British hardware, cloth and glass, but they were taught to be distrustful of British traders. Captain Symes laments: "If properly encouraged, they would rid us of much of the unsaleable refuse of Calcutta."<sup>1</sup> An important commercial advantage which might accrue from the establishment of friendly relations with Burma was the opening of a route to China. The Burmese carried cotton to China in small country boats. They had even offered to convey Sorel to that country.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to these commercial advantages, Sir John Shore anticipated important political advantages too. He wrote, "..... in the event of a war with

Shore observes, "We are not aware of any particular grievances sustained by British subjects in the dominions of the King of Ava ... " (P. C., November 10, 1794, No. 46). In April, 1795, Captain Symes wrote, " ... 52 ships in the course of last season have been cleared out of Rangoon for English ports." (P. C., June 5, 1795, No. 14). An English merchant named Dyer, who had been living in Rangoon for six or seven years, wrote to Captain Symes, " ... I have never met with any ill treatment from the Government." (P. C., December 21, 1795, No. 42).

1 P. C., November 10, 1794, No. 46.

2 P. C., November 10, 1794, No. 46.



any maritime Power<sup>1</sup> we might avail ourselves of amicable intercourse to induce the King of Ava to refuse the benefit and freedom of his ports to the enemy."<sup>2</sup> We shall see how this prophecy came true in Lord Wellesley's time.

The receipt of a friendly letter from 'the minister of Pegu'<sup>3</sup> strengthened Sir John Shore's determination to send an Agent to Ava. In February, 1795, Captain Symes was asked to proceed to Burma. He was to be accompanied by a surveyor (Ensign Wood) and a Surgeon (Peter Cochrane). The Governor-General personally drafted the instructions which were to regulate the activities of the Agent. His 'primary object' was to be the promotion of Anglo-Burmese friendship. If, on his arrival in Rangoon, the Agent found that the reception of a British Agent at the court of Ava would be opposed, he was authorised to return to Calcutta, without even announcing his mission. Although he was to protest if he found himself 'exposed to illiberal or insulting treatment,' yet he was asked to 'make every allowance for the habits and manners' of the Burmese. 'Useless importance' was not to be attached to matters of form

1 Revolutionary France had declared war against England in February, 1793.

2 P. C., November 10, 1794, No. 46.

3 P. C., November 10, 1794, No. 47.

or ceremony. The Agent was to convince the Burmese Government that "commerce, and not conquest, is the object of the British nation in India." The following specific concessions should be demanded if the attitude of the Burmese Court appeared favourable: (1) the establishment of a regular and free communication through Arakan; (2) the exclusion of French ships from Burmese ports; (3) the expulsion of Frenchmen living in Arakan;<sup>1</sup> (4) the removal of all obstacles to British trade in Burma; (5) the establishment of a market town on the banks of the Naf river. The Agent was also required to collect reliable information about the possibility of exporting British articles into Burma. He might, if possible, reduce to writing the regulations for promoting commerce between the British Empire and Burma, but such a convention was to be strictly limited to commercial objects only. He might also suggest the advisability of receiving a British Consul at Rangoon. Finally, he was asked to submit detailed reports about (1) the constitution and military strength of Burma; (2) the state of the commerce between Burma and China, and the possibility of establishing communications between India and China by the channel

<sup>1</sup> They were suspected of complicity in the troubles described in Chapter II.

of Burma, and (3) the history, geography, religion and natural products of Burma and the intellectual and military progress of the Burmese. Enquiries on these points were not to be pursued at the risk of exciting the suspicions of the Burmese Government.<sup>1</sup>

Captain Symes left Calcutta on February 21, 1795, and arrived at Rangoon on March 20. Every mark of attention and respect due to the Agent of the British Government was shown to him.<sup>2</sup> Some of the Rangoon officials subsequently exhibited symptoms of jealousy and distrust,<sup>3</sup> but Captain Symes gradually succeeded in securing their confidence. He went to Pegu and saw the Viceroy, who did not omit any act of hospitality.<sup>4</sup> He started for Amarapura on May 30; the Burmese officials spared no trouble to provide him with the best accommodation that the

1 P. C., February 6, 1795, No. 39.

2 P. C., May 8, 1795, No. 18.

3 For details, see Symes, *An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava*, Vol. I, pp. 178-187. Symes complains of "the vigilant suspicion with which I was guarded, and the restriction, little short of imprisonment, imposed on myself and my attendants, aggravated by the humiliating prohibition against holding any intercourse with my own countrymen."

4 P. C., June, 5, 1795, No. 14. Symes and his party took part in Burmese festivals at Pegu. (*An Account of an Embassy*, Vol. I, Chap. XI).

country boats could supply. He was accompanied by the Viceroy of Pegu.<sup>1</sup>

In his preliminary report Captain Symes gave a tentative account of the economic condition of Burma.<sup>2</sup> Rangoon was a flourishing port; its opulence was daily increasing. Bassein was better adapted than Rangoon for the convenience of shipping.<sup>3</sup> Mergui and Tavoy were also commodious ports. Pegu was a very fertile province. The people were healthy, robust and active, 'resembling the Chinese in their habits and the Malays in feature.' The principal product of Pegu was timber: "It is the staple which our trade cannot be supplied from any other quarter, except at a rate so high, as deeply to affect, if not wholly destroy, the internal commerce of India." Stick lac, tin, elephants' teeth, bees' wax, emeralds, rubies, sapphires—these were the other articles of commerce which Pegu could supply. The mines of Ava were very rich: gold, silver and lead might be procured in abundance. But the export of these valuable metals was strictly forbidden.

1 P. C., October 21, 1795, No. 4.

2 This is in substantial agreement with Captain Cox's account. (P. C., March 2, 1798, No. 4).

3 "Bassein as a naval port yields to none, and would soon far exceed any one in India ..."—Captain Cox. (P. C., March 2, 1798, No. 5).

Salt and salt petre were royal monopolies. Sugar thrived exceedingly in the northern provinces. Indigo was manufactured in a clumsy manner. Rice was abundant, but "they cultivate no more than they can consume. They might supply the want of other countries with advantage to themselves." Burmese silk was coarse but durable. Cotton was remarkably fine; it was exported to Yunan, the south-west province of China. Pegu, Captain Symes concludes, might have "risen to a higher standard in the scale of mercantile nations, had not destructive war depopulated the empire, insecurity checked the spirit of adventure, and the most arbitrary despotism<sup>1</sup> destroyed in the bud the early shoots of commerce....."<sup>2</sup>

Burmese laws were in many respects favourable to foreigners: "as a stranger you are exempted from several rules which a native cannot infringe with impunity." The duties levied on foreign merchants were not unreasonable. Usually ten per cent. was demanded on imports. Duties on imports were usually levied in kind. An additional duty of  $2\frac{1}{2}$

<sup>1</sup> "Informers are publicly and privately employed. The man who amasses wealth is suspected, and he who is suspected, dies, or if levity is shewn him, purchases life at the expense of all his acquisitions."

<sup>2</sup> P. C., October 21, 1795, No. 2.

per cent. was collected in lieu of godown charges, stamp, and the remuneration of writers and watchmen. The merchants were allowed to keep their goods in Government godowns; they were thus "insured security to their goods from thieves, which perhaps renders it an advantageous bargain on both sides." In addition to duties, there were port charges levied on ships. The duties on exports usually amounted to 5 per cent. Captain Symes observes, "It is not of the amount of duties that the merchant has reason to complain; it is of the obstacles thrown in his way by the under-members of Government."<sup>1</sup>

Although Captain Symes frequently harps on the oppression of the Rangoon officials, he contradicts himself by saying that he never found any European merchant suffering unjustly in any particular case. He says, "Europeans oftener give than receive cause of individual offence." He himself offers an explanation for this state of things. Those Europeans who went to Burma were usually men of despicable character. They engaged in trade without sufficient capital. Naturally they found themselves involved in troubles and tried to 'extenuate their fault, or cloak their folly, by uttering violent invectives against the Government that called them to account."<sup>2</sup>

1 P. C., October 21, 1795, No. 2.

2 "Nor is this a heightened picture—the reality is within

The Government of Burma provided facilities for ship-building in Rangoon. No duty was demanded on articles which were imported for this purpose. No port duties were levied on newly built ships when they left Rangoon for the first time. The Burmese were hard workers and improved rapidly under the direction of European engineers.<sup>1</sup>

Instead of coins, the Burmese used 'bullion modified to different standards.' "No man in trade receives or pays his own money, nor indeed could he do it with safety. A banker, who is also an assayer of metals, keeps your accounts, and is your cashier."<sup>2</sup> Foreigners naturally found themselves in difficulty due to the want of current coins.

Captain Symes reached Amarapura on July 18. No exception could be taken to the reception accorded to him,<sup>3</sup> and excellent arrangements were made for his residence. His public reception by the King was delayed by a lunar eclipse, 'a phenomenon which they

my knowledge."—Captain Symes. (P. C., October 21, 1795, No. 2).

<sup>1</sup> P. C., October 2, 1795, No. 2.

<sup>2</sup> P. C., October 2, 1795, No. 2.

<sup>3</sup> "... compliments had been paid to me which were never before extended to the Agent of any other nation ... ." But Captain Cox reported later on that Captain Symes had been led about by the Burmese officials 'like a wild beast for the amusement of the multitude.' (P. C., March 2, 1798, No. 5).

attributed to the resentment of a malignant demon.' The Governor-General's letter to the King was read informally by the ministers on July 28. The effect of the letter on the conduct of the officials was excellent: "they have now added confidence to the respect which they before observed towards me."<sup>1</sup> The King received him on September 30, but did not speak to him.<sup>2</sup>

Captain Symes left Amarapura on October 29. He had succeeded in securing the following commercial concessions from the Burmese Government:

1. English merchants or their agents have free liberty to go to whatever part of the Burman dominions they think fit, for the purpose of selling their own goods or purchasing the produce of the country.

2. No inland customs are to be exacted on goods which have paid the import duties and a certificate granted by the Governor of the town or province where the duties have been paid is to be a passport for all such goods to go free of further duties through the Burman dominions.

3. The customs which heretofore have been levied (though never authorized) between Rangoon and Amarapura, at the several *chokeys*,<sup>3</sup> seventeen in

1 P. C., October 21, 1795, No. 5.

2 *An Account of an Embassy*, Vol. II, pp. 162-166.

3 Posts or Stations for the collection of customs duties.



number, are now wholly abolished on imports, and the customs to be paid at each *chokey* on the produce of the country carried down are clearly defined and determined.

4. English traders are authorised to purchase and transport timber ... subject to no other duty than 5 per cent. payable at Rangoon.

5. English merchants who may think themselves aggrieved are allowed to complain to the throne.....

6. One imposition has long prevailed of exacting the port duties at Rangoon in fine silver Amara-pura currency. This practice is forbidden and Rangoon currency is substituted in its room. Rangoon currency is 25 per cent. inferior to that of Amarapura.

7. English traders are allowed to employ whatever interpreter they please.

8. The customary charges on a ship as well as the duties levied at Rangoon are accurately defined and limited.

9. Any English ship driven into Burma ports by stress of weather and in want of repair, is to receive from the officers of Government all possible aid at the current rates of the country."<sup>1</sup>

"These regulations," says Symes, "expressed ... with clearness and precision, were equally liberal and satisfactory; and, on the part of the Burman Government, were voluntarily granted, from a conviction of the equity on which they were founded, and the reciprocal advantages they were likely to offer."<sup>1</sup> They were not, however, embodied in a treaty. They were laid down in two documents—a letter from the King to the Governor-General, which Symes describes as 'a curious specimen of the extravagant phraseology of oriental compositions', and an order from the chief minister to the Viceroy of Pegu and to governors of 'sea-port towns in general.'<sup>2</sup>

As regards French vessels in Burmese ports, two ships took shelter in Mergui in August and sailed in October. Another French ship came to Rangoon in November and sailed immediately for the Dutch Settlements or the Isle of France. Another ship came to Rangoon from Mauritius.<sup>3</sup> The Burmese

1 *An Account of an Embassy*, Vol. II, p. 171-172.

2 *An Account of an Embassy*, Vol. II. p. 170.

3 This ship brought 'unfavourable report about Europe.' At Amarapura a Burmese official "promulgated it with an addition, that a powerful fleet was on its voyage from France to India, and that four French ships of war were triumphantly cruising the Indian seas. This intelligence ... was diligently improved by the Armenian and Mussulman merchants, who insinuated that, if our present overtures sprang not from treachery,

Government 'refused her a cargo of provisions and likewise rejected a requisition made by the Master for Burman colours which he was very desirous of procuring'.<sup>1</sup>

Captain Symes reached Calcutta on December 22, 1795.<sup>2</sup> The detailed report of his proceedings which he submitted to the Governor-General convinced Sir John Shore that his policy of sending 'an official Agent to Burma was justified by the results. The difficulties encountered by Captain Symes<sup>3</sup> were attributed by the Governor-General to the traditional pride of the Burmese King, the intrigues of suspicious and selfish officials and the reports of French victories in Europe. Moreover, Captain Symes was treated, not as the envoy of an independent sovereign, but as the Agent of a 'provincial administration below the rank of sovereignty.' Sir John Shore regretted the refusal of the Burmese King to send an Agent to Calcutta. The decision to appoint an Agent had

they originated in fear; at the same time renewing a report ... of a combination of all the powers of India to deprive Great Britain of her possessions in the East ... "—*An Account of an Embassy*, Vol II, p. 147.

1 P. C., December 21, 1795, No. 38.

2 *An Account of an Embassy*, Vol. II, pp. 232-233.

3 *An Account of an Embassy*, Vol. I, pp. 178-187, 256; Vol. II, pp. 148-159.

been officially communicated to Captain Symes and an official had been actually selected for the purpose; but the arrival of a French vessel from the Isle of France led the King to drop the matter altogether. Sir John Shore was naturally anxious about the growth of the French menace in Burma, and in his view one of the most important effects of sending the embassy to Burma was to counteract that threatening prospect. Burma might injure British shipping by cutting up the supply of timber. She might allow French engineers to build ships in Rangoon! She might allow French warships to take shelter in, and to draw provisions from, her ports. 'To frustrate these consequences' it was necessary to cultivate friendly relations with the court of Ava. Captain Symes had showed the way; others might follow. The Burmese King had expressed a desire that a Brahmin 'well-versed in Astronomy and Hindu Learning' might be sent to him. Sir John Shore wanted to send a man who possessed, in addition to learning, 'talent which may be politically useful, from his situation at the court of Ava.'<sup>1</sup>

In the commercial concessions secured by Captain Symes the Governor-General found 'a new

1 P. C., January 4, 1796, No. 32. A Brahmin was actually sent, but whether his 'talents' proved 'politically useful' we do not know. (P. C., February 29, 1796, No. 25).

proof of that circumspection which marked his conduct throughout his deputation.' The channel of commerce was fairly opened, and if it was fairly pursued, it was likely to lead to 'the advantage of individuals and to public benefit.' He concluded by saying that the result of the embassy had 'equalled the most sanguine expectations which I could form.'<sup>1</sup>

In September, 1796, the Viceroy of Pegu was informed that the Governor-General wanted to appoint an Agent who would reside at Rangoon. His purpose would be to confirm the friendship existing between the two states and to promote 'the benefits of commerce.' The person selected for this responsible post was Captain Hiram Cox.<sup>2</sup>

Before Captain Cox could undertake his duties at Rangoon the Governor of Arakan revived the question of the *Mag* refugees. In a letter addressed to the Governor-General he demanded the surrender of three *Mags* specifically named, together with all

1 P. C., January 4, 1796, No. 32. He wrote to Dundas, President of the Board of Control, "The termination of the Embassy to Ava, will not I trust prove disreputable to the Government or the Negotiator. The actual Expense may be one Lac of Rupees, and a further Charge will be incurred of probably thirty thousand more. I think we have gained an Equivalent." (Furber, *The Private Record of an Indian Governor-Generalship*, p. 88).

2 P. C., September 19, 1796, No. 21.

Burmese subjects 'now at or near Chittagong.'<sup>1</sup> Sir John Shore was surprised 'at the very unexpected and peremptory terms of the requisition.' Captain Symes had reported that the Burmese King was fully satisfied by the surrender of the three fugitives demanded in 1794, and that he was not likely to sanction a renewal of *Mag* troubles.<sup>2</sup> So the Governor of Arakan was informed that his demand could not be complied with, and he was requested to refer his future demands to Captain Cox.<sup>3</sup>

In July, 1797, the Judge of Chittagong reported that one of the three refugees surrendered in January, 1795, who had made his escape on the way to Amarapura,<sup>4</sup> was living within the Company's territories.<sup>5</sup> He was informed that the King of Burma had sent to Arakan three *Sardars* with 300 troops, and that 14,000 men were soon to follow. This army was instructed to invade Chittagong in case the British Government refused to surrender the prisoner.<sup>6</sup> Sir John Shore did not take these reports seriously, for no formal demand had been made by the Burmese Government for the surrender of the

1 P. C., January 23, 1797, No. 27.

2 P. C., January 23, 1797, No. 26.

3 P. C., January 23, 1797, No. 29.

5 P. C., July 28, 1797, No. 15.

6 P. C., August 7, 1797, No. 3.

4 See p. 80.

prisoner. The Judge was instructed to prevent the escape of the unfortunate man and to surrender him if a formal claim was made either by the Governor of Arakan or by the Government of Burma.<sup>1</sup>

In the meanwhile Captain Cox had arrived at Amarapura<sup>2</sup> and submitted to the King three documents in which he gave a detailed statement of the concessions he wanted. The first document<sup>3</sup> dealt with the question of diplomatic immunities. The British Agent was to be free from liability to Burmese jurisdiction; all complaints against him were to be referred to Calcutta. He was to be at liberty to punish all persons who composed his retinue or received monthly wages from him. Provisions and other articles required for the Agent and his retinue were to be free from duties. He was to be allowed

1 P. C., September 4, 1797, No. 31.

2 He did not go from Rangoon to Amarapura on his own initiative; the Governor of Rangoon was peremptorily ordered to send him to the capital, "for it is a positive law of the Empire that all messengers, envoys or ambassadors shall be forwarded, without communication, to the presence." (P. C., January 21, 1799, No. 36).

He reached the capital on January 27, 1797. His reception left much to be desired. (Cox, *Journal of a Residence in the Burman Empire*, pp. 2-15, 51, 83, 114-115, 119, 137, 207, 262-264).

3 P. C., March 2, 1798, No. 3.

to build a house at Rangoon for the location of his residence and office. He was to be allowed to maintain a guard of *sepoys*, the number of whom would be determined by the Burmese Government. He was "not to be required to take off his shoes on any occasion but at such place where carpets are laid for him to tread upon, as from his habit and constitution the wetting his feet may be fatal to his health."<sup>1</sup> He was to be allowed free access to the King and the members of the royal family. A proper place, 'suitable to the high rank and power of the Government he represented,' was to be assigned to him at Court. All communications to British authorities were to be sent through him alone: "letters sent through any other channel.....will not be considered by the Governor-General as authentic."

The second document<sup>2</sup> dealt with questions relating to commerce. Captain Cox demanded that (1) coins should be introduced for the better regulation of trade; (2) duties levied on ships at Rangoon should be reduced; (3) there should be no vexatious examination of articles at the ports; (4) import duties should

<sup>1</sup> This is probably the origin of the famous 'Shoe Question' which later on became one of the principal bones of contention between the Governments of India and Burma.

<sup>2</sup> P. C., March 2, 1798, No. 3.



be reduced to 5 per cent; (5) English merchants were to be at liberty to sell and buy goods in all parts of the Burmese Empire; (6) English merchants were to be provided with legal and administrative facilities for the recovery of their dues from Burmese subjects; (7) offences committed by British subjects in ships on the high seas were not to be subject to Burmese jurisdiction; (8) all property belonging to British subjects dying in Burma intestate was to be delivered over to the British Agent; (9) all disputes relating to trade between British and Burmese subjects were to be settled by arbitrators nominated by the parties; (10) English ships were to be allowed to take on board provisions for three months for passengers and crew; (11) English vessels were not to be detained on any pretence at Burmese ports after the clearance of port dues.

The third document<sup>1</sup> referred to political questions. In return for the surrender of the *Mag* refugees in 1795, Captain Cox demanded that the Burmese King should not in future "permit the enemies of the English nation to take shelter within his dominions or refresh their crews and repair the damages of their vessels at his ports—much more permit them to sell their prizes as has lately been done

<sup>1</sup> P. C., March 2, 1798, No. 3.

by the French privateers." All French ships arriving at Burmese ports were to be ordered to leave within 48 hours under pain of confiscation. All Burmese officials and subjects were to be ordered not to sell provisions or warlike stores to, and hold communication with, any French vessel.

Before these demands were formally considered by the Burmese Government, Captain Cox received a letter from some British subjects trading at Rangoon. They brought to his notice the fact that the Burmese King had authorised a 'Moorman' named Boudin to be 'the sole purchaser and seller of all the goods and merchandizes imported and exported to and from' Rangoon.<sup>1</sup> This was a clear violation of the commercial agreement concluded by Captain Symes.

Sir John Shore believed that the military strength of Burma could not be 'formidable to the Company.'<sup>2</sup> Captain Cox calculated that the total population of Burma amounted approximately to 11,200,000—'a very scanty population indeed for so extended a territory.'<sup>3</sup> The proportion of women to men did

1 P. C., March 2, 1798, No. 3. See also P. C., October 1, 1799, No. 6.

2 P. C., January 4, 1796, No. 32.

3 Symes says that the approximate total population,

not exceed 3 to 1, the disparity being due largely to 'the incessant state of warfare in which the Burma nation has been engaged by the restless ambition of its sovereigns, particularly those of the present dynasty.' These calculations led Captain Cox to believe that the Burmese King 'would find it extremely difficult to raise and maintain for any length of time an army of 60,000 men.' Burma had no standing army.<sup>1</sup> Her army was composed of 'levies raised on the spur of the occasion' by princes and officials who held their lands by military tenure. Naturally the peasants tried to avoid the burden of military service.<sup>2</sup> So the outbreak of war threw the country into commotion: "many of the poorer classes fly to the jungles or totally abandon their country". Those who were compelled to enlist themselves had to furnish their own arms—a short spear and a sword.<sup>3</sup>

excluding Arakan, was 14,400,000. (*An Account of an Embassy*, Vol. II, p. 52).

1 Symes says that the only regular army consisted of the bodyguard and the police of the capital. (*An Account of an Embassy*, Vol. II, p. 55).

2 "I saw strings of these miserable recruits, boys under age and decrepit old men, marching from Arakan to Amarapura."—Captain Cox (P. C., March 2, 1798, No. 4). Symes supports this statement. (*An Account of an Embassy*, Vol. II, pp. 55).

3. Symes says that the infantry was armed with muskets and sabres and the cavalry with spears. (*An Account of an Embassy*, Vol. II, p. 56).

Muskets were provided from the King's stores, but they had to pay for them. Ammunition was provided gratis. The soldiers had to find their own food or to buy it from the King's stores. The relatives of deserters were burnt alive. No reliance was placed on the loyalty of the troops. "Men for the defence of the eastern frontier were drafted from the West, those for the defence of the southern from the North, and *vice versa*, in order to secure their fidelity." Every town on the rivers had to furnish a war boat. Each boat carried 40 to 50 men. The King could collect 200 or 300 boats at any time. The sailors<sup>1</sup> were more efficient than the soldiers, "as they live chiefly by rapine and are in a constant state of hostility with the rest of the people, which makes them audacious and prompt to execute any orders, however cruel or violent." In general, the Burmese undoubtedly possessed 'brutal courage,' which, according to the British Agent, tended 'rather to debase than exalt them; it is irregular, uncertain and not to be depended on." Captain Cox heard that the King was constantly in apprehension of a British attack. To deal with that catastrophe he had collected an army consisting of about 30,000 men—

<sup>1</sup> They used swords and lances. (Symes, *An Account of an Embassy*, Vol. II, p. 59).

10,000 in Arakan, 10,000 on the Assam border and 10,000 in the province of Pegu.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of his exertions Captain Cox failed to secure any concession from the court of Amarapura. He had to return to Rangoon without receiving any assurance from the King.<sup>2</sup> He suspected that the King was "either fearful of the consequences, or desirous of enhancing the value of the favour, by increasing the difficulties of attainment."<sup>3</sup> In Rangoon he was treated by Burmese officials as 'a state prisoner;' he did not rule out the possibility of personal violence. A military force was assembled near the mouth of the river to prevent any British ship from coming to the rescue of the British Agent.<sup>4</sup> On receipt of this information the Government of Bengal wrote to the chief minister of Burma, asking him to facilitate Captain Cox's departure from Rangoon.<sup>5</sup> The Agent landed in Calcutta on November 1, 1797.<sup>6</sup>

Captain Cox submitted to the Government an elaborate explanation regarding the causes of his

1 P. C., March 2, 1798, No. 4.

2 P. C., March 2, 1798, No. 10.

3 *Journal of a Residence*, p. 289.

4 P. C., March 2, 1798, No. 5.

5 P. C., March 2, 1798, No. 10.

6 *Journal of a Residence*, p. 431.

failure. The principal cause he found in the mistaken impression conveyed to the Governor-General by Captain Symes. He says, "The Burma court and nation are there (i.e., in the reports of Captain Symes) depicted as a most polished, hospitable and sagacious people.<sup>1</sup> His public indignities are glossed over and his personal consolements are ostentatiously displayed. The fallacious and trivial concessions of a treacherous Government are detailed with all the embellishments of diction, while the bleeding interests and honor of his country<sup>2</sup> are unnoticed." This surprising attitude on the part of Captain Symes was due, according to Captain Cox, to his excessive reliance on Baba Sheen, a member of the Council of the Governor of Rangoon: "in truth Captain Symes was but a mere speaking automaton in the hands of Baba Sheen, implicitly believing and repeating whatever he was told." Captain Symes had recommended Baba Sheen to Captain Cox's confidence, yet he<sup>3</sup> had

<sup>1</sup> Captain Cox himself described the Burmese court as "an assembly of clowns" and "the followers of the court or camps" as ungrateful, rapacious, cruel, treacherous, avaricious and lazy. (P. C., March 2, 1798, No. 4).

<sup>2</sup> For a specific instance, see P. C., October 1, 1799, No. 6. For general complaints of British subjects trading in Burma, see P. C., October 1, 1799, No. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Captain Symes.

secretly 'branded' this man as 'infamous' in a letter to his Burmese superior.<sup>1</sup> Captain Cox doubted whether Sir John Shore would have sent him to Burma if Captain Symes had given him an accurate idea about the Burmese court and the people. The Governor-General was led to expect that the Burmese King was really friendly, and that British interests in Burma might be placed on a secure basis by further negotiations. Captain Cox was, however, convinced that the King 'had ever been averse to a connection with us.' The commercial concessions secured by Captain Symes were altogether illusory,<sup>2</sup> as the privileges granted to Boudin<sup>3</sup> showed. The prohibition regarding French ships, which Captain Symes had made much of, was 'perfectly ridiculous'; after his departure the Burmese "received, comforted and permitted the sale of a French prize in their ports and

1 In his published journal Symes describes the character of Baba Sheen in the following words: "His learning was universal, being slightly versed in almost every science; but his information, extensive as it was, although it gained him employment, could not procure him confidence. He was said to be deficient in other essential requisites." (*An Account of an Embassy*, Vol. I, p. 191).

2 Captain Symes himself doubted whether the document which granted those concessions could be called a treaty. (*Journal*, p. 149).

3 See p. 105.

granted to Frenchmen the protection of their passes and flag." That the Burmese were unwilling to allow a British Agent to reside permanently in their country was proved by the insolence with which they treated Captain Cox and also by their refusal to grant his demands concerning diplomatic immunities.<sup>1</sup>

Captain Cox realised his difficulties as soon as he landed in Burma, and in spite of many provocations he pursued a policy of patient but firm conciliation.<sup>2</sup> His failure was generally due, according to his own version, to "the extreme ignorance of the Burman Government of the relative importance and rights of other nations, excessive pride inflated by an uninterrupted victory over the surrounding still more barbarous hordes, and to the general clamour and intrigue of the infamous crew of renegades and refugees of all nations who infest their dominions and poison their councils." An accident that largely inspired Burmese insolence towards Captain Cox was the circulation of the news of the indignities suffered by Lord Macartney at Peking. The concluding sentence of Anderson's book on Lord Macartney's embassy

1 P. C., March 2, 1798, No. 5.

2 The Burmese court viewed his conduct as an example of 'rusticity and ill humour.' (*Journal of Symes*, p. 543).



ran as follows: "We entered the country like paupers, remained in it like prisoners and quitted it like vagrants." A Burmese translation of that book was available to the King and the ministers. Naturally they did not consider it necessary to pay serious attention to the demands of these weak and despised English merchants.<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt that the statements of Captain Cox were substantially true, and that he had formed a more accurate idea about Burma than his credulous and optimistic predecessor. If Sir John Shore's sanguine expectations were frustrated, this was due to his natural reliance on a man whom he reasonably regarded as an expert on Burmese questions. Burma was a strange land; very few Englishmen had any idea about the character, resources and policy of the Burmese people. But the Government of Bengal must be held responsible for their rejection of Captain Cox's advice. His reports were regarded as incredible,<sup>2</sup> and Captain Symes continued to enjoy his reputation as the greatest authority on Burmese affairs. Yet Captain Cox revealed his political in-

1 P. C., March 2, 1798, No. 5.

2 "Cox brought such an amazing account, so utterly at variance with Symes, that the Government of India thought he must be ill or over-wrought, or perhaps he had made some mistake....."—Harvey, *History of Burma*, pp. 285-286.

sight when he wrote, "A firm and solid alliance with this nation is absolutely necessary for the security of your Eastern dominions, for if they do not place themselves under our protection, or we do not acquire a right to protect them, the French will be masters of the country in a very short time....."<sup>1</sup> It was left for Lord Wellesley to appreciate the significance of these words; but unfortunately he relied on Captain Symes, and 'a firm and solid alliance' with Burma remained as distant a prospect as ever.

1 P. C., March 2, 1798, No. 5. Towards the close of 1796 a French naval squadron tried to make the island of Cheduba a place of rendezvous. (S. C., January 6, 1797, No. 2; March 6, 1797, No. 8, 9, 10).

## CHAPTER IV

### LORD WELLESLEY AND BURMA

On Lord Wellesley's arrival in India as Governor-General the Viceroy of Pegu sent a letter of congratulation. This letter contained a request for permission to buy 'ten to twenty thousand stand of arms' in Calcutta. The Government of Bengal authorised a Burmese agent to buy 1,000 stand of arms.<sup>1</sup> This friendly gesture was followed by a fresh incursion of Burmese troops on the Chittagong frontier.

Even after the troubles of 1794 fugitives from Arakan continued to enter into the district of Chittagong. In January, 1799, a large body of *Mags* (accompanied by their wives and children) made their way into British territory by sea and through the hills and jungles. They resisted all attempts made by British officers to induce them to return to their own country. Considerations of humanity precluded British authorities from expelling these unfortunate emigrants by force. They were allowed to settle in British territory; Burmese authorities were at the same

<sup>1</sup> P. C., December 17, 1798, No. 30.

time informed that specific demands for the surrender of criminals would be carefully considered. In spite of this a large body of Burmese troops crossed the frontier. The policy of the British Government was fully explained to them on the spot by British officers who were stationed there, but the Burmese began to establish stockades and their number went on increasing. They were then compelled by force to evacuate British territory.<sup>1</sup>

After this incident the Government of Bengal considered it necessary to send an Agent 'to Arakan and eventually to Ava.'<sup>2</sup> The choice fell upon Lieutenant Thomas Hill. He was instructed 'to enter into an explanation with the Burma Government on the subject of the emigrants from Arakan and to endeavour to bring the business to an amicable adjustment.' He was to tell the Burmese clearly and unequivocally that the British Government would not expel the emigrants by force, although no pains would be spared to induce them peacefully to return to Arakan. He was also to make it clear that the policy

1 P. C., February 11, 1799, No. 9; February 15, 1799, No. 3; June 24, 1799, No. 3.

2 Lieutenant Hill was instructed to wait at Arakan and not to proceed to Amarapura. If the King wanted him to go to the capital, he was to request the King to write to Calcutta to authorise him to proceed there.

adopted by Sir John Shore in 1794—the policy of surrendering criminals against whom adequate evidence was available—was still in force.<sup>1</sup>

Before Lieutenant Hill's arrival in Arakan the Viceroy of Pegu again requested the Government of Bengal to supply him with arms from the Government arsenal. This request was refused, although Burmese agents were permitted to purchase arms in the open market.<sup>2</sup>

Lieutenant Hill arrived in Arakan on September 27, 1799. He had a long interview with the Governor, and a full discussion took place about the question of the refugees. The Governor argued that the Burmese incursion into Chittagong was due solely to the protection given by British officials to rebellious *Mags*. Burmese troops, he said, did not invade British territory; they merely pursued the emigrants and established stockades for their own protection. Lieutenant Hill clearly explained what 'violation of territory' meant in International Law. The Governor then declared that this unhappy incident should be forgotten and the old ties of friendship uniting the two states should be strengthened. Lieutenant Hill

1. P. C., June 24, 1799, No. 3.

2. P. C., August 22, 1799, No. 7; August 29, 1799, No. 3, 4.

expressed his agreement with this view. The Governor then demanded the surrender of all the refugees. When Lieutenant Hill wanted names and evidence of guilt, he was told that all the refugees were guilty of ravaging various districts in the province of Arakan. The Governor refused to allow him to leave Arakan 'till the business was finished'. Lieutenant Hill protested. He was then told that no restraint would be put on his movements, although he was expected to stay till the arrival of final instructions from Amarapura.<sup>1</sup>

Another interview took place a few days later in the presence of the Governors of Cheduba, Ramree and Sandway. The Governor of Arakan said that a list of *Mag* rebel leaders would be sent to Calcutta. He expected that the Governor-General would not object 'to a small force being sent to seize them.' Lieutenant Hill observed that although criminals would be surrendered, the despatch of any armed force into British territory on any pretence whatsoever would 'most certainly be the cause of a war.' The Governor then said that he would send, not an army, but an ambassador.<sup>2</sup> When these proceedings were reported to Calcutta, Lieutenant Hill was asked to leave Arakan

1 P. C., December 17, 1799, No. 3.

2 P. C., December 17, 1799, No. 4.

at once; the original object of his mission was considered to be 'sufficiently answered' by the mutual explanations which had taken place between him and the Governor of Arakan.<sup>1</sup>

In December, 1799, Lieutenant Hill was informed that a letter had been received from the King. The Governor of Arakan was directed 'to demand the surrender of all the emigrants, both new and old, without exception.' Lieutenant Hill said that he could give no new information or assurance. He wanted to leave Arakan, but the Governor of Arakan requested him to stay till the arrival of a fresh letter from the King.<sup>2</sup> He was allowed to leave Arakan in February, 1800<sup>3</sup>

Lieutenant Hill was followed by a Burmese Agent, who came to Calcutta and demanded the surrender of 'all the emigrants, both men and women,' whose names were specifically mentioned in a list prepared by the Governor of Arakan.<sup>4</sup> The Governor-General wrote to the Governor of Arakan that no refugee would be surrendered unless his guilt was established beyond doubt. He added that in order

1 P. C., December 17, 1799, No. 6.

2 P. C., February 20, 1800, No. 9, 10.

3 P. C., February 27, 1800, No. 22.

4 P. C., June 26, 1800, No. 148.

to satisfy the King of Burma he would issue a proclamation declaring that no Burmese subject would in future be allowed to settle in British territory.<sup>1</sup>

It appeared from the reports of the Magistrate of Chittagong that some *Mag sardars* living near the frontier were creating troubles. They invited people from Arakan to settle within British jurisdiction. They prevented *Mags* living within British jurisdiction from returning to Arakan. The Governor of Arakan was following a comparatively liberal policy to those *Mags* who returned to their own country; although the *sardars* were cruelly punished, ordinary *Mags* were well received. The Magistrate recommended that the troublesome *sardars* should be compelled to leave Chittagong and asked to settle in any other district (Tipperah, for instance) at some distance from the Burmese frontier. This would curb their intrigues and put an end to Burmese demands for their surrender. This would also induce most of the emigrants to return to Arakan.<sup>2</sup> This policy met with the approval of the Government.<sup>3</sup>

The matter was reported to the Governor of Arakan, but he was not satisfied. The old demand

1 P. C., June, 26, 1800, No. 149.

2 P. C., July 23, 1801, No. 11.

3 P. C., July 23, 1801, No. 14.



for the surrender of the refugees was reiterated.<sup>1</sup> His attitude was so threatening that defensive measures had to be taken. Troops were sent from Dacca to the Chittagong frontier.<sup>2</sup> A strong but conciliatory letter<sup>3</sup> was despatched to the King of Burma. In that letter it was announced that Colonel Symes would be again sent to Amarapura 'to promote the mutual interests and to cement the friendship of the two states.'

The two primary objects of the envoy were to solve the tedious problem of the refugees and to counteract French intrigues in Burma.<sup>4</sup> Another object to which his attention was particularly directed was the probability of a war of succession in Burma. Information had been received in Calcutta to the

1 P. C., January 7, 1802, No. 4B.

2 S. C., February 18, 1802, No. 25, 26.

3 S. C., April 29, 1802, No. 21.

4 ".....although the conclusion of peace between Great Britain and France (Peace of Amiens) precludes the British Government from requiring any engagement for the exclusion and expulsion of the subjects of France from the Dominion of Ava, it would not be inconsistent with the amicable relations subsisting between His Majesty and the French Republic to require from the King of Ava an obligation to expel from his Dominion the subjects of any European State with whom we may hereafter be engaged in war....." (S. C., September 2, 1802, No. 4). Lord Wellesley probably anticipated the renewal of war with France at an early date.

effect that King Bodawpaya intended to abdicate in favour of his eldest son (the *Engy Tecking*). The claim of the eldest son was likely to be resisted by a younger son (the *Tongha Tukeen*). The Siamese would probably assist the latter. "The military character of the *Tongha Tukeen* and the resources which he is enabled to command may be supposed to render his opposition extremely hazardous to the stability of his brother's power." Both parties might take advantage of the British envoy's presence in Burma to ask for military assistance from the Government of Bengal. Such a contingency Lord Wellesley welcomed as a good opportunity 'for the purpose of establishing British influence and of promoting British interests in the Burmese Empire.' Colonel Symes was explicitly authorised to offer military assistance to the *Engy Tecking*. The number of troops to be furnished on the occasion was to be regulated by circumstances. Colonel Symes was directed to induce the *Engy Tecking* 'to subsidize permanently the British force' which might be sent to place him on the throne; but his consent to this proposition was not to be rendered the indispensable condition of granting the military aid asked for. Even if no direct application for British aid was made by the *Engy Tecking*, Colonel Symes was authorised to offer it, "provided that the state of affairs in that country

should be such as to induce you to expect that the offer will be accepted, and that the court is merely withheld from a direct application by considerations of fear or jealousy."<sup>1</sup> These speculations proved to be quite premature; Colonel Symes did not notice the symptoms of a civil war in Burma.

Colonel Symes arrived at Rangoon on May 31, 1802.<sup>2</sup> He was received with proper ceremonials and showed the respect due to his position. Some difficulties were indeed raised by Burmese officials, but they were frustrated by the firmness and tact of the envoy. It was clear, however, that they regarded the Governor-General as a man of inferior rank than their King; Colonel Symes could not, therefore, be treated as an ambassador from a sovereign ruler. Though Colonel Symes tried to induce them 'to consider the Governor-General in the light of a sovereign with reference to their own court',<sup>3</sup> his efforts were not successful.<sup>4</sup> Burmese officials continued to exhibit symptoms of jealousy and distrust.<sup>5</sup> He was compelled to wait at Rangoon till he was summoned to

1 S. C., April 29, 1802, No. 23.

2 S. C., September 2, 1802, No. 1.

3 S. C., September 2, 1802, No. 2.

4 Down to the days of Thibaw Burmese Kings refused to regard Governors-General of India as their equals.

5 S. C., September 2, 1802, No. 3.

the capital by the King.<sup>1</sup> The expected invitation came in August, 1802.<sup>2</sup> Colonel Symes reached Amarapura in the following month.<sup>3</sup>

During his journey to Amarapura Colonel Symes detected an appreciable change of attitude on the part of Burmese officials. The absence of ceremonials was so marked that "even our low Burmese conductors perceived it."<sup>4</sup> No improvement was noticeable even after the envoy's arrival at the capital. Of the prominent persons in the court only the Viceroy of Pegu, who had assisted Colonel Symes in 1795, paid him frequent visits and expressed a favourable disposition. No official residence was provided for the envoy and the other members of the Mission. The King issued orders for disarming Colonel Symes and his followers, but the execution of this command was secretly stopped by the ministers.<sup>5</sup>

A good friend of the Burmese like Colonel Symes was naturally shocked at the conduct of the Court.

<sup>1</sup> S. C., September 2, 1802, No. 9.

<sup>2</sup> S. C., October 21, 1802, No. 46.

<sup>3</sup> The following account is taken from the unpublished *Journal of Captain Symes* (Foreign Department Miscellaneous and Separate Records, No. 109).

<sup>4</sup> *Journal*, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> *Journal*, pp. 5-6, 10-11, 24, 57, 63, 69-70, 79, 80, 85, 91, 93-94, 108, 118-119, 132, 136-137.

For a few days it appeared inexplicable; then the reasons became clear. A French ship from Mauritius had arrived at Rangoon a few days before the British envoy's arrival at the capital. That ship brought a letter from the French Governor of that island. The letter was addressed to the King of Burma. It expressed a strong desire for the establishment of friendly relations with Burma and contained a promise to the effect that the French authorities were prepared to supply arms and ammunition to the Burmese King. The letter was carried by one Bevan, an American of French connections. As soon as this news reached the capital the King changed his mind. He sent orders that no respect should be shown to the British envoy, but the French envoy—Bevan was taken as such—should be brought to the capital with proper ceremonials. Symes says, "It was to be proclaimed to the world that deputies from the two greatest states of Europe came at the same time to court his alliance and ask his protection." The King openly referred to the English with contempt and betrayed his pro-French inclination. Those members of the court who, like the Viceroy of Pegu, were really suspicious of the French and friendly to the English, did not dare to contradict the King. Symes says, "Now that he has avowed his partiality to the French, every voice in the court re-echoes his senti-

ments." There was no alternative for the courtiers. The Viceroy of Pegu told Colonel Symes that "the King resembled a tiger, a beast to be least trusted when he seemed most tame." The real intentions of the King were difficult to fathom. An Italian priest, who had lived in Burma for more than 20 years, told Colonel Symes that although the King would gladly take some Frenchmen into his service and utilise the French navy to repel British invasion, he would neither grant the French any territorial settlement nor 'suffer the entrance of such a foreign force into his dominions as might endanger his own Government or give weight to any faction.'<sup>1</sup>

At this unexpected crisis Colonel Symes tried to take advantage of the favourable disposition exhibited by the Viceroy of Pegu. He explained to him in detail 'the national character and sinister views of our rivals, their spirit of aggrandisement.' He asked him 'to warn the King of giving encouragement to a people who were looking for a country to conquer.' He narrated how "Tipu had brought down destruction on himself by founding an alliance with the French." The Viceroy admitted the 'justice' of these remarks but said that "it was difficult to combat the King's prejudice." He asked Colonel Symes to tell him clearly

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, pp. 25-28, 41, 48, 50, 54-56, 100-101, 107, 109, 111-113, 115, 121, 475.

what the Governor-General wanted. The envoy took this opportunity to send to the Viceroy the following statement of British demands classified under four articles:<sup>1</sup>

“1. Perpetual peace and friendship to subsist between English and Burman States, and neither is at any time to supply the enemies of the other with materials of war. This is not to be understood to prohibit the relief of any vessels in distress or to impede mercantile intercourse.

2. The British Government is not desirous to extend its territorial possessions, but if hereafter at any time the Burman Government shall deem it expedient to grant a factory or ground for building or lands for any purpose to any European nation, the English is to have the preference, and no immunity of any kind shall be granted to any European nation without a similar and equally advantageous one being granted to the English.

3. The treaty<sup>2</sup> agreed on and ratified in 1795 between Captain Symes and the Burmese Government is to be considered in full force and effect.

4. Whenever cause of discussion shall arise between the English and Burman States, such matter

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, pp. 132-140.

<sup>2</sup> Symes himself says, “if a paper couched in such terms can be called a treaty.” (*Journal*, p. 149).

is to be represented through the person residing on the part of the Company at Rangoon and all communications made by the Resident are to be considered authentic".<sup>1</sup>

These concessions were 'all' that Colonel Symes considered 'necessary to accord us complete security against the intrigues of our rivals.'<sup>2</sup> The papers sent by him to the Viceroy were submitted to the King. The heir-apparent invited the King's attention to the fact that the British envoy did not want any territorial concessions. The King said that Colonel Symes meant well, but he must wait. Colonel Symes told the Viceroy that he would leave the capital by the end of November unless the King 'came to some resolution' about his demands. The result of this remonstrance was satisfactory: the King was induced by the heir-apparent and the Queen to agree to see the British envoy. Immediate effect, however, was not given to this resolution. But Colonel Symes was respectfully conducted to an official residence, which he describes as 'in every respect unexceptionable.'<sup>3</sup>

The King was really unwilling to arrive at a final decision till he saw the French 'envoy.' In vain

1 *Journal*, pp. 487-500.

2 *Journal*, p. 141.

3 *Journal*. pp. 158-160, 163-164, 176, 188, 190.



did Colonel Symes point out to the Viceroy 'the impolicy of treating the master of a ship as an accredited minister.' Towards the middle of November the French party arrived at Amarapura. It was composed of four persons, of whom Bevan was the chief. The official residence provided for their use was 'in every respect inferior' to the house allotted to Colonel Symes. He says, "My private information is that the appearance made by the French has a good deal embarrassed the King by touching his pride, while the populace deride in pointed terms the rivals of the English, whom they have been led to expect in a style of at least equal splendour." The 'humble appearance and manners' of a member of the French 'Mission' provoked sarcastic remarks from the Burmese guards of Colonel Symes. But the King was 'determined not to disappoint his own pride by declining to give them a formal reception, although he knew well they had no claim to such a distinction.' Bevan was sent by the Governor of Mauritius to carry on negotiations secretly. He disclaimed all 'pretensions' to formal honour, but, says Symes, "the foolish vanity of the King will not let slip this opportunity of recording the public reception of a French ambassador."<sup>1</sup>

The French 'envoy' was received by the King on November 26 with very little ceremony. Colonel Symes received audience two days later. His reception was far more flattering. The King expressed friendly sentiments and 'desired that a monstrous idol composed of cast iron lately made by his orders should be shown to us.' Formal visits to the ministers and princes followed. The French were suffered to sink into neglect. "They have been", says Colonel Symes, "the pageant of a day, answered the foolish purpose for which they were called at Amarapura, and have gained nothing." They sent certain proposals to the Viceroy of Pegu, who refused even to submit them to the King.<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Symes now found it possible to discuss specific proposals with the Viceroy. He was assured that no demand would ever again be made for fugitives. With regard to the demands submitted by him, the Viceroy expressed the King's 'determination not to grant lands or settlements to any European Power.' Other matters, he said, would revert exactly to the same state in which Colonel Symes had left them in 1795. The Viceroy informed him that he had been vested by the King with full authority to deal with all matters relating to

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, pp. 246, 253-254, 256-257, 259-262, 267, 270-276, 282-284, 289-294.

foreigners. It would be better, he suggested, if in future the British Government sent all communications to the Burmese Court through him alone. He referred significantly to 'the capricious and despotic disposition of the King.' The Viceroy also agreed to secure for the British Government the right of establishing a Resident at Rangoon. He hoped that if they 'proceeded by degrees,' they would be able to procure a factory at Rangoon.<sup>1</sup>

The Italian priest, already referred to,<sup>2</sup> told Colonel Symes a story which, if true, proves that as early as 1783 the French had thought of occupying the province of Pegu in order to make it a base of operations against British Bengal. The famous French admiral de Suffrein met the Bishop of Pegu, who was a friend of the Italian priest, in Europe in 1783 and 'was particularly inquisitive about the local and political circumstances of Burma.' The admiral told the Bishop that "he soon expected to see him in that part of the world, for Pegu was the country through which the English might be attacked in India with most advantage." The plan was frustrated by the outbreak of the Revolution and the death of the admiral, 'the chief promoter of this scheme.'<sup>3</sup> The materials

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, pp. 295, 298-299.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 125.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal*. pp. 325-327.

at our disposal do not allow us to verify the accuracy of this story, but there is nothing inherently improbable in it. Intelligent Burmese officials were quite aware of the seriousness of the French menace to their country. The Viceroy assured Colonel Symes that so long as he and the heir-apparent retained any influence on the King, the French would never obtain 'a settlement or permanent footing of any kind in his country.'<sup>1</sup>

There was nothing more to be done at the capital; so Colonel Symes started for Rangoon on December 23. He reached the vicinity of Rangoon on January 11, 1803. Here he encountered unexpected opposition from the Lieutenant-Governor of the city. This official was a personal rival of the Viceroy of Pegu; he had aroused the King's suspicion by representing the Viceroy 'as a dangerous person, much attached to the English and ready to concur with them in any plot' against the throne. The King had, therefore, detained the Viceroy at the capital, without allowing him to come to Rangoon. This gave the Lieutenant-Governor a free hand. He insulted some members of the British Mission, refused to allow a British ship to salute the envoy's boat, and, finally, tried to detain Colonel Symes 'until

1 *Journal*, pp. 363-364.

answer should arrive from Amarapura.' The envoy 'judged it expedient to be in readiness to repel, and, if necessary, to anticipate attack.' A British ship was placed in the most advantageous position to attack the stockade, and the British force on shore was prepared to act offensively. The Lieutenant-Governor tried to create an alarm in the city by proclaiming that the English would kill the citizens of Rangoon when they were asleep, but 'the tide of popular opinion was strong' in favour of the foreigners. At last the Lieutenant-Governor apologised to Colonel Symes and allowed him to leave Rangoon peacefully.<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Symes returned to Calcutta with nothing more than an empty letter<sup>2</sup> written by 'four chief Ministers of Burma,' which he had received before his departure from Rangoon. That letter merely conveyed the King's order that "inhabitants of Bengal might come to his ports to sell, purchase and trade according to ancient customs." There was no reference to the question of the refugees, or to the French. There was no explanation of the term 'ancient customs' which was to regulate trade. There was no mention of the proposals submitted by Colonel Symes. The envoy observes, "It seems he (i.e., the

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, pp. 384-424.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal*, pp. 541-543.

King of Burma) will treat with no power on earth as an equal. He will grant a boon but will not make a treaty, and whatever he gives must be in the form of a mandate issued in favour of a suppliant." Symes claims, however, that "a very detrimental alliance between Burma and the French has been prevented, and French influence, if not eradicated, has at least been considerably diminished even in the King's mind." His own *Journal* makes it clear that this desirable result arose, not from his own diplomatic skill or even from the presence of the British Mission at the critical hour, but from the character of the persons composing the French 'Mission.' Even in his concluding observations, of which these claims form a part, Colonel Symes admits that the King wanted to utilise the French as a counterpoise against the English. True to the exaggerated optimism which spoilt the value of his diplomatic career, Colonel Symes asserts, ".....a powerful party has been formed in favour of the English which, let the result be peace or war, cannot fail to give us an advantage, either a preponderating weight in the council, or, if such aid were necessary to our success, an easy conquest in the field." It was certainly too much to expect that the Viceroy of Pegu and the heir-apparent would assist the British to effect 'an easy conquest in the field,' if the King decided to favour the French.

Nor is Colonel Symes more logical when he says, "Our principles of Government are now widely diffused among all classes of Burmese, who cannot avoid contrasting those principles with the wretched system to which they are forced to submit." How could 'all classes of Burmese' acquire an intimate knowledge of the principles of British administration from the accidental appearance in their court of an envoy who was not allowed by their Government even to talk with non-officials? Indeed, the two Missions of Colonel Symes were not less unsuccessful than the Mission of Captain Cox; but the latter had a sense of reality, while the former lacked that quality. Failure was perhaps inevitable, for the ways of the Burmese court were tortuous. But there is no reason why Colonel Symes should have twice misled his Government by giving a rosy picture of an unpleasant situation. "I am decidedly of opinion," says he, "that a paramount influence in the Government and administration of Ava, obtain it how we may, is now become indispensably necessary to the interests and security of the British possessions in the East." Unfortunately he failed to point out how that 'paramount influence' could be obtained.<sup>1</sup>

While Colonel Symes was on his way to Cal-

cutta, clouds of war were gathering on the European horizon: the Peace of Amiens was about to be broken.<sup>1</sup> Lord Wellesley kept himself well-informed about events in Europe and regulated his Indian policy accordingly. As soon as he heard that war was likely to break out in Europe he 'deemed it of great importance that we should possess the means of obtaining authentic information of transactions in the Burmese Empire.' He was naturally anxious to prevent the establishment of French influence in that country. Lieutenant Canning, who had accompanied Colonel Symes to Burma in 1802, was sent to Rangoon in the capacity of an Agent of Colonel Symes under the authority of the Governor-General.<sup>2</sup>

Lieutenant Canning's primary duty was to deal with the French menace. 'The French were very likely to obtain a footing in Burma 'either by sinister negotiation or by force of arms.' They might even be invited by the King of Burma, who was at that time badly in need of assistance against Siam. In December, 1802, the Viceroy of Pegu had indicated to Colonel Symes the necessity of employing a maritime force against the Siamese. The Burmese were more likely to ask for this maritime force from Mauritius than from Calcutta. They were more

1 War began in May, 1803.

2 P. C., May, 12, 1803. No. 27.



afraid of the British than of the French. Moreover, their religious feelings had been outraged by the British conquest of Kandy,<sup>1</sup> 'by the pollution of their most holy shrines and by the expulsion of their acknowledged Pontiff.' A competent British officer observes, "I am assured that it has caused a sensation throughout the Burmese Empire similar to what zealous Mussalmans would feel had infidels captured Mecca and profaned the sacred Caba." Under the circumstances, the Burmese King might invite the French and allow his country to be used by them as a base of operations against the English. Such a contingency Lieutenant Canning was expected to prevent.<sup>2</sup>

Lieutenant Canning arrived at Rangoon on May 31, 1803. He carried two letters from Colonel Symes, addressed to the heir-apparent and the Viceroy of Pegu. His reception was satisfactory. The Lieutenant-Governor who had insulted Colonel Symes had already left Rangoon for the capital in response

1 At the beginning of 1795 Ceylon was seized by an expedition from Madras; but the mountain Kingdom of Kandy remained independent. In 1803 the English took possession of Kandy, but as soon as the bulk of the force was withdrawn, the remainder was massacred by the Ceylonese. Kandy was finally conquered in 1816.—*Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. IX, pp. 733-734 (Cheap edition).

2 *Journal of Symes*, pp. 359-360, 594-606.

to royal orders; the government of the city was temporarily in the hands of the subordinate members of his council. The letters brought by Lieutenant Canning were despatched to the capital.<sup>1</sup>

It was expected that the Lieutenant-Governor would be punished by the King, or at least dismissed from his office, for his discourtesy to Colonel Symes. But in October, 1803, he returned to Rangoon 'with additional powers and honour that put him nearly on an equality with the royal family.' This was looked upon by every one as 'the sole act of the King,'<sup>2</sup> for it was generally known that the heir-apparent and the Viceroy of Pegu had tried their best to prevent his return to his former office. The Lieutenant-Governor lost no time in showing that the British Agent could not expect any favour from him. He declared that all letters received by foreigners should be subject to his inspection. This was an innovation repugnant to all foreigners, specially to political agents like Lieutenant Canning. He firmly refused to submit to this procedure; yet a letter addressed to him was opened by Burmese officials. Lieutenant Canning

1 S. C., June 20, 1805, No. 440.

2 Lieutenant Canning observes, "... the object of the King appears to have been to exalt his own power and importance in the eyes of the British Government and thus deter it from ever having recourse to hostile measures."

thereupon left Rangoon (November 13, 1803), considering it unsafe to stay there any longer.<sup>1</sup>

During his stay in Rangoon Lieutenant Canning was told by a European priest that though the King was willing to give the best terms to the highest bidder, he would never enter into a specific treaty with the French, nor grant them any territorial concession.<sup>2</sup> In the long run this analysis of Burmese policy proved to be true.<sup>3</sup> The war with Siam was going on as before; in addition, the Shans had invaded Burmese territory.<sup>4</sup> Yet the King showed no signs of invoking French assistance. French ships and French officers were, indeed, coming to and leaving Burmese ports; but no definite information was available regarding their intention or the real attitude of the Burmese court towards them. Lieutenant Canning, however, suspected that the French were trying 'to feel their ground.'<sup>5</sup> He apprehended a repetition of Dupleix's exploits: "the Burmans," wrote he, "strong and robust, free from all shackles of caste, satisfied with the coarsest fare, and insensible to the

1 S. C., June 20, 1805, N3. 440.

2 S. C., June 20, 1805, N3. 440.

3 Lieutenant Canning agreed with this conclusion. (S. C., July 5, 1804. No. 134).

4 S. C., July 5, 1804, No. 130.

5 S. C., July 5, 1804, No. 124; June 20, 1805, No. 443, 446, 447.

hardships of the climate, if disciplined by French adventurers paid by their own Government, and supplied with warlike stores by France, or taught to manufacture them themselves, might, at a future period, prove to us very troublesome neighbours.”<sup>1</sup> At the same time he believed that ‘the glorious conclusion of the late Maharatta war’<sup>2</sup> would ‘have a due share of influence in the Burma councils in respect to this country.’<sup>3</sup>

1 S. C., July 5, 1804, No. 134.

2 Second Anglo-Maratha War.

3 S. C., June 20, 1805, No. 447.

## CHAPTER V

### THE QUESTION OF ARAKAN REFUGEES (1807-1822)

Soon after Lord Wellesley's departure from India<sup>1</sup> the Government of Bengal had to protest against a particularly high-handed act on the part of the Burmese officials at Rangoon. It appears that a vessel was proceeding from the Isle of France to Rangoon under Burmese colours. She aroused the suspicion of a British ship of war. On search it was discovered that she did not possess the necessary papers to prove her nationality. The British ship of war seized her and took her to Rangoon. There she was seized by Burmese officials. The commander of the British ship of war was not prepared to give up his lawful prize. He forcibly brought the captured vessel out of the river. The Governor of Rangoon threw all British residents of the city into prison and ordered the rudders of all English ships in the river to be 'unhung.' Sir George Barlow, who had in the meanwhile assumed the Governor-Generalship,<sup>2</sup> requested the Viceroy of Pegu to release the prisoners

1 August 15, 1805.

2 October, 1805.

and the ships, who had been victimised for no offence of theirs, although he did not justify the conduct of the commander of the British ship.<sup>1</sup> In reply the Burmese Government stated that British residents of Rangoon were neither imprisoned nor molested, and that the 'unhanging' of the rudders was the normal procedure.<sup>2</sup> The vessel in question was then restored to the Burmese Government.<sup>3</sup>

After Lord Minto's assumption of office as Governor-General<sup>4</sup> a Burmese envoy came to Calcutta to protest against the violation of Burmese territorial sovereignty by a British man of war. In January, 1807, a French ship tried to pass between the island of Cheduba and the coast of Arakan and 'got aground.' The Captain of a British ship of war, which was then within sight, sent a boat to the spot. The French ship fired upon the boat. The English Captain then sent his man to take possession of the French ship. They found that the ship was wrecked. The crew had left her and gone to the shore; only the Captain and one officer were found on board. These officers were taken to the British ship.

1 P. C., January 16, 1806, No. 7. S. C., July 17, 1806. No. 108A.

2 S. C., July 17, 1806, No. 109.

3 P. C., March 28, 1808, No. 55.

4 July 3, 1807.

The English Captain then went in search of the crew, who willingly came with him to his ship. All these men were ultimately sent to the Isle of France. The Burmese Government argued that the English Captain had no right to arrest the French officers and men in Burmese territory. Lord Minto replied that Burmese territory was 'violated not by the English, but by the French, who ..... fired upon the English boat.'<sup>1</sup> The matter ended there. Later on Lord Minto conciliated the Viceroy of Pegu by permitting his agents to buy salt petre and muskets in Calcutta.<sup>2</sup>

While these petty disputes were distracting the attention of British authorities in India, England was making a desperate attempt to frustrate the Continental System inaugurated by Napoleon in 1806. By an Order in Council, dated November 11, 1807, it was declared that all trade in articles produced by countries excluding British ships and goods, or by their colonies, was to be considered unlawful, and that all ships trading to or from the said countries or their colonies, together with all merchandise and produce belonging thereto, were thenceforth to be lawful prize.<sup>3</sup> If this order was to be rigidly enforced, the 'extensive trade

1 P. C., March 28, 1808, No. 55, 56.

2 P. C., April 29, 1809, No. 162, 163.

3 *Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. IX, p. 366 (Cheap edition).

carried on between Pegu and the French islands' was likely to be severely curtailed. The result would, therefore, be unfavourable to 'the commercial interests and the revenue of the Government of Pegu.' Lord Minto apprehended that the King of Burma would not accept this loss as a necessary 'evil eventually inseparable from a maritime war between other states.' "In the East," he observed, "where these laws (i.e., laws of maritime war) are utterly unknown, their observation must naturally tend to excite the complaints and the resentment of the neutral states whose interests are affected by them. The prohibition of the trade to the blockaded ports and the penalty of infringing that prohibition will be deemed on our part acts of hostility." Such an interpretation was to be expected particularly from Burma, which might retaliate by seizing the persons and property of British subjects 'within the reach of its power' and by prohibiting British trade altogether.<sup>1</sup>

In July, 1809, Lord Minto decided to send Captain Canning to Burma. He was not authorised to assume 'the style and title of Envoy'; he was to act as an Agent for the accomplishment of certain specific purposes. He was not to proceed beyond Rangoon, unless it was found absolutely necessary to

1 P. C., July 20, 1809, No. 11.



go to the capital. His principal object was to explain the significance of Blockade and to convince the Burmese Government that the measures adopted against the French were not acts of hostility against Burma. If the Burmese Government refused to be convinced, Captain Canning was to take measures for 'protecting from violence the persons and property of British subjects.'<sup>1</sup>

Captain Canning arrived at Rangoon on October 1, 1809. The Lieutenant-Governor who had previously insisted on opening his letters was still in charge of Rangoon. Naturally Captain Canning expected an unfavourable reception, but he soon found that the Lieutenant-Governor had changed his attitude.<sup>2</sup> His first impression was that French influence had declined in or almost disappeared from Burma.<sup>3</sup> His explanations satisfied the Lieutenant-Governor and his council, and prompt measures were taken to send his letters to the capital. He noted two favourable circumstances which, he thought, would prevent the

1 P. C., July 20, 1809, No. 24.

2 P. C., November 14, 1809, No. 24.

3 P. C., December 5, 1809, No. 131. Captain Canning stated that no "official communication between the Government of Ava and the Isle of France has taken place since my departure from Rangoon in November, 1803." (P. C., December 26, 1809, No. 57).

King from adopting a hostile attitude. The large income which he derived from Rangoon was drawn almost wholly from the port dues and commercial taxes paid by British merchants. For him it would be a suicidal measure to bring about a rupture with the British Government. Moreover, the war with Siam was still going on with unabated fury, and the King was mobilising all his resources in men and money in order to send a grand expedition to occupy the capital of that country.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the close of October the Viceroy of Pegu came to Rangoon. He showed special marks of favour to Captain Canning and told him that, so far as his personal opinion was concerned, he was prepared to accept British regulations about the blockade of the French islands. Captain Canning was summoned to Amarapura.<sup>2</sup> He left Rangoon on December 23 and arrived at the capital on February 9, 1810.<sup>3</sup>

Captain Canning gives us a terrible picture of Burma. During his journey from Rangoon to Amarapura he frequently came across deserted villages and decayed towns. Burma, he says, was far more pros-

1 P. C., December 26, 1809, No. 57.

2 P. C., January 9, 1810, No. 72.

3 P. C., May 29, 1810, No. 1.

perous in 1803. "The misery of the people," says he, "is beyond description; children of various ages were repeatedly brought to me whose fathers had been driven to the war (with Siam), and whom their mother begged me to accept in the hope of procuring for their offspring that sustenance which they were unable to afford. The wretched inhabitants, dragged from their houses, or publicly sold if unable to pay the exorbitant requisitions of the Government, to avoid famine and disaster in a camp, or the miseries of slavery, have in numerous bands had recourse to open rebellion, and now infest the great rivers in such a manner as to render navigation impracticable to any boat not well-protected."<sup>1</sup>

The capital provided an atmosphere of terror and intrigue. "The present King," says Captain Canning, "at all times despotic, superstitious and cruel, has of late years been rendered by age still more gloomy and suspicious, and his temper is now become insupportable to his family and to all whom necessity obliges to approach him. He has half persuaded himself that immortality is attainable by charms and elixirs which he is at all times compounding. No one is now anxious to offer advice to a man who frequently pursues with a sword or spear any person

whose countenance chances to displease him, and who in sudden fits of rage has ordered hundreds to execution, and afterwards blamed his ministers for not interfering in their favour, by doing which they would probably have provoked the same fate.”<sup>1</sup> The court was humming with intrigues. The King’s eldest son, who had shown so much favour to Colonel Symes, was dead. Although the King had declared the son of the dead Prince as his successor, Captain Canning apprehended that his (i.e., the King’s) four surviving sons were not likely to yield without a struggle. “In fine,” says he, “the court of Amarapura presents at this moment a scene of jealousy, feud and treachery between those connected by the nearest ties of blood that has perhaps seldom been equalled.”<sup>2</sup> While Captain Canning was at Rangoon, the Viceroy of Pegu had asked him whether the British Government would be prepared to give military assistance to the young Prince against his uncles. For this help he was prepared to give ‘any tract of land’ which the British Government might want. Captain Canning said that he was not authorised to discuss the matter officially, but in his private capacity he encouraged the Viceroy to be hope-

1 P. C., May 29, 1810, No. 1.

2 P. C., May 29, 1810, No. 1.

ful. He expressed similar sentiments to the young heir-apparent on his arrival in the capital.<sup>1</sup>

Soon after his arrival in Amarapura Captain Canning heard from reliable persons that "the King claimed Chittagong and Dacca as having anciently formed part of the kingdom of Arakan".<sup>2</sup> His "private apartment was filled with maps and plans of Dacca and Chittagong, which he was strongly bent on annexing". Before the British Agent's departure from the capital the King sent some spies to Chittagong and Dacca "for the purpose of taking plans of these provinces and of the islands of Sandwip and Hatia."<sup>3</sup> No official claim was, however, addressed to Captain Canning.<sup>4</sup>

A few days later a deputation of Burmese minis-

1 P. C., May 29, 1810, No. 1.

2 Although Chittagong was for many years a part of the Kingdom of Arakan, Dacca was never permanently annexed by the *Mags*. For them Dacca was nothing more than a flourishing field for plunder. When Captain Cox went to Amarapura, the Burmese ministers hinted that the King would claim 'Chittagong, Luckipore, Dacca and the whole of the Casembuzar island.' (*Journal of a Residence*, p. 300). 'Luckipore' is probably Lakshmpur, now an important village in the district of Noakhali.

3 These islands are at present included in the district of Noakhali. They lie at the mouth of the river Meghna. They were constantly subjected to Arakanese depredations during the Mughal period.

4 P. C., May 29, 1810, No. 1.

ters came to see Captain Canning. They made various enquiries about the principles and justification of Blockade and appeared satisfied with the Agent's replies. They persuaded the King to grant a formal interview to Captain Canning. He still refused to accept the Governor-General as his equal. He told Captain Canning that he was entitled to an Embassy from the King of England, because the Governor-General held only delegated authority. The letter finally issued by the King's order 'contained nothing satisfactory' respecting the 'business' of Captain Canning's Mission and was written in 'a very objectionable style'. But the heir-apparent ordered that the Lieutenant-Governor of Rangoon should not in future grant passports or protection of the Burmese flag to ships bound for the French islands.<sup>1</sup>

With this empty concession Captain Canning left Amarapura on March 29 and started from Rangoon on April 19. His reception at the capital he regarded as 'little short of insult', for no notice was taken of his arrival for a fortnight. He came to the conclusion that "the system of moderation adopted by the British Government towards Ava has failed of having the desired effect". The King, he thought,

1 P. C., May 29, 1810, No. 1; June 16, 1810, No. 64.

'ascribes our forbearance to want of power'. He did not consider Burma strong enough to challenge British power. He says, "In the Upper Provinces we observed no troops nor any appearance of armed force. The only body of men bearing a very distant resemblance of regular troops that we saw in the country were those that accompanied the late Viceroy of Pegu on his entrance into Rangoon.....". He considered that the invasion of Chittagong was 'not a certainty but a probability'. If this apprehension proved to be true, Captain Canning recommended that the province of Arakan should be 'the forfeit of such aggression'. Geographically this province is a continuation of the plain that extends from Chittagong as far as Cape Negrais; a high range of mountains separates it from Burma proper. British India might reach its 'natural frontier' if Arakan was incorporated within Bengal. This extension of the frontier would 'secure Bengal from all future attack from the Burmese by the impenetrable barrier of the Arakan mountains'. Moreover, Arakan was a very fertile granary; it also supplied teak, elephants' teeth and other valuable articles.<sup>1</sup>

On Captain Canning's arrival in Calcutta the Governor-General expressed 'high appreciation of the

1 P. C., May 29, 1810, No. 1.

zeal, discretion and ability' displayed by him. One point, however, was disapproved. It was not proper for him, the Governor-General observed, to encourage the heir-apparent "to look for the active support of the British Government in securing the succession... as it never could be in the contemplation of the Government to interpose its power for that purpose."<sup>1</sup> The policy of non-intervention was at work: the days of Lord Wellesley were over.

The difficulties arising out of the blockade of the French islands came to an end with the seizure of those islands by the British navy (1810). But petty disputes arose now and then to disturb the tranquillity of the Burmese court. About the middle of 1810 a British ship of war seized certain military stores from a Burmese brig, and the crew of a Burmese brig were seized and detained by the Government of Madras. A Burmese envoy came to Calcutta to obtain redress for these grievances. No trace was available of the ship which had seized the military stores. The captured crew of the Burmese brig were sent to Rangoon.<sup>2</sup> It is uncertain whether these measures satisfied the Burmese Government. Within a few months the authorities in Calcutta had

1 P. C., May 29, 1810, No. 2.

2 P. C., June 14, 1811, No. 49, 50.



to protest against 'vexatious delays and detention' suffered by British ships at Rangoon.<sup>1</sup>

In 1811 serious troubles arose in connection with the invasion of Arakan by a *Mag* refugee named Kingbering. Through the negligence of Police *darogas*<sup>2</sup> he was able to collect a considerable body of refugees and establish himself on the eastern side of the Naf river. When these proceedings came to the notice of the Magistrate of Chittagong, he tried, without success, to seize the person of Kingbering and to prevent *Mags* living within his jurisdiction from joining his standard. But Kingbering's army did not consist merely of men recruited from British territory; it was joined by many inhabitants of Arakan as he carried on hostilities against the Burmese officials in that province. He succeeded in bringing nearly the whole of Arakan temporarily under his authority. It seems that the inhabitants, exasperated by 25 years of Burmese tyranny, voluntarily submitted to him. But he knew that he was not strong enough to maintain his authority permanently against the superior strength of Burma. So he posed as a nominee of the British Government and

1 P. C., June 14, 1811, No. 49, 51.

2 The *daroga* of Tek Naf was dismissed. (P. C., November 22, 1811, No. 4).

actually requested that Government to accept tribute from him. Lord Minto peremptorily rejected this request.<sup>1</sup>

It was clear that the court of Ava would accuse British authorities of instigating this rebellion. The Burmese officials in Arakan, whose cruelty and incompetence were primarily responsible for Kingbering's success, ascribed the invasion to 'the designs and assistance of the British Government'. This explanation was very likely to be accepted as true by the King and his ministers. It was apprehended in Calcutta that reprisals might be taken against British subjects living in Rangoon. It was, therefore, decided that Captain Canning should again be sent to Burma.<sup>2</sup>

The primary object of Captain Canning's Mission was to convince the court of Ava that the British Government, instead of instigating and assisting Kingbering, had done their best to restrain him.<sup>3</sup> If the Burmese Government demanded British assist-

<sup>1</sup> P. C., September 6, 1811, No. 50; November 22, 1811, No. 4.

<sup>2</sup> P. C., September 6, 1811, No. 50; October 11, 1811, No. 4.

<sup>3</sup> The measures adopted by the Magistrate of Chittagong are detailed in Captain Canning's letter to the Viceroy of Pegu. (P. C., November 22, 1811, No. 4).

ance for the re-establishment of their authority over Arakan, Captain Canning was authorised to give a negative reply.<sup>1</sup> If the Burmese Government seized the person and property of British subjects living in Rangoon, Captain Canning was asked to demand their release, and to threaten 'a rupture between the two States' in case his demand was rejected. He was not authorised 'to proceed to measures of force' without reference to Calcutta. Finally, Captain Canning was asked to make it clear that his appearance at the Burmese Court was not a 'deprecatory solicitation'. He was told that his representations must not be 'couched in the language of apology'. His Mission was not 'dictated by any other motive than a sense of the right of the Government of Ava to receive an explanation of the circumstances under which that Government has been deprived of a valuable portion of its dominions by means originally derived from the Company's provinces'.<sup>2</sup>

Captain Canning arrived at Rangoon on October 21, 1811. He found that all Burmese officials, including the Viceroy of Pegu,<sup>3</sup> entertained 'a strong

1 "The British Government cannot reasonably be expected to remedy evils arising from the disaffection of the subjects of the King of Ava."

2 P. C., September 6, 1811, No. 50.

3 Not that Viceroy who had helped Colonel Symes.

suspicion that a large force of refugee *Mags* could not have been collected in a British province, nor the invasion of Arakan by Kingbering have taken place, without the knowledge and participation of the British Government.<sup>1</sup> Captain Canning tried to convince the Viceroy that his impression was wrong,<sup>2</sup> but the latter remained as suspicious as before.<sup>3</sup> He sent an envoy to Calcutta and demanded that if Kingbering or any of his associates again fled to British territory, they should not only be refused asylum but seized and delivered to Burmese officials.<sup>4</sup> Lord Minto was prepared to expel them from British territory, but he refused to agree to surrender them to the Burmese Government.<sup>5</sup>

In the meanwhile Burmese troops had succeeded in defeating Kingbering and dispersing his forces. Many of his followers crossed the Naf and took shelter in British territory. The Magistrate of Chittagong apprehended that Burmese troops might enter into British territory in pursuit of the rebels. So a detachment of troops was sent to the southern

1 P. C., November 22, 1811, No. 4.

2 His letter to the Viceroy was considered by the Supreme Council to be too apologetic. (P. C., November 22, 1811, No. 5).

3 P. C., December 26, 1811, No. 6.

4 P. C., January 17, 1812, No. 63.

5 P. C., January 17, 1812, No. 63.

frontier. This unforeseen incursion of a large number of refugees compelled Lord Minto to modify his original plan of compelling them to leave British territory. The refugees might be divided into three classes—Kingbering and other leaders, *Mags* who had accompanied Kingbering from Chittagong, and *Mags* who had left Arakan after the defeat of Kingbering. With regard to the leaders, Lord Minto was 'unwilling to deliver up even Kingbering to the sanguinary vengeance of the Burmese Government', although in future circumstances might 'render that measure expedient'. He was, however, prepared to compel them 'to quit the limits of the province of Chittagong'. With regard to the second class of refugees, although they were to be given immediate protection from the pursuit of the Burmese army, they would ultimately be compelled 'to retire from our provinces'. No definite conclusion was formed about the ultimate fate of the third class of refugees, although for the time being they were to be allowed to take shelter in Chittagong. These points were communicated to Captain Canning in due course and he was authorised to intimate the Burmese Government accordingly.<sup>1</sup>

In February, 1812, the Governor of Arakan

1 P. C., January 25, 1812, No. 53.

formally demanded the surrender of Kingbering and other leaders of the late rebellion, and declared that, if his demand was rejected, he would pursue them 'to whatever quarter of the Company's territory they may retreat'.<sup>1</sup> The Magistrate of Chittagong informed him that he would arrest Kingbering, but the question of surrendering him could be decided by the Supreme Government alone. Lord Minto approved this reply, although the Magistrate was told that he had 'attributed to Government ... a greater degree of solicitude for their (i.e., rebel leaders') apprehension than is in reality entertained'.<sup>2</sup> Kingbering and some members of his family were arrested. The Magistrate of Chittagong was asked to treat them 'with every degree of delicacy and kindness'; they were neither to be surrendered to the Burmese nor allowed to escape. Troops were sent from Dacca to the southern frontier in order to deal with 'the menaced invasion of the Burmese forces'.<sup>3</sup> A ship, accompanied by a cruiser of 20 guns, was sent to Rangoon to provide for Captain Canning's 'safety and eventual retreat'. He was authorised to leave Rangoon if he was insulted or threatened with violence.<sup>4</sup>

1 S. C., February 21, 1812, No. 34.

2 S. C., February 21, 1812, No. 22.

3 S. C., February 21, 1812, No. 33.

4 S. C., February 21, 1812, No. 34; March 13, 1812, No. 9.

These apprehensions of the Supreme Government were not baseless. The Magistrate of Chittagong reported that the Burmese *vakils* were trying to mislead him by 'pacific proposals', while about 500 Burmese troops crossed the Naf and fired on British troops.<sup>1</sup> Captain Canning was thereupon asked to 'remonstrate against the deceitful conduct of the Burmese officers on the frontier'.<sup>2</sup> Colonel Morgan, who commanded British troops in Chittagong, took the 'pacific proposals' of the Burmese *vakils* seriously<sup>3</sup> and invited them to a conference. One of their demands was that the refugees belonging to the third class<sup>4</sup> should be 'encouraged, permitted and ordered' to return to Arakan 'under assurances of good treatment on the part of the Government of Ava'. Colonel Morgan was informed that this demand might be complied with, if 'some authentic and formal security shall be afforded for the safety of the emigrants by written stipulations under the signature of the Raja of Arakan'.<sup>5</sup> It was reported that the Burmese General intended to encamp near the

1 S. C., March 13, 1812, No. 2.

2 S. C., March 13, 1812, No. 4.

3 S. C., March 20, 1812, No. 13. His conduct was disapproved by the Government. (S. C., March 20, 1812, No. 15).

4 See p. 156.

5 S. C., March 13, 1812, No. 27.

Naf during the rainy season of 1812.<sup>1</sup> He probably expected to occupy that portion of British territory which was inhabited by the *Mags* during the heavy rains, when British troops were likely to leave that unhealthy region.<sup>2</sup> But he changed his mind in April, 1812, probably in response to orders received from the Viceroy of Pegu, and adopted a really pacific attitude. In May Lord Minto concluded that the Burmese no longer meditated 'designs of a hostile nature'. British troops were ordered to leave the frontier.<sup>3</sup>

It is necessary at this stage to turn to the activities of Captain Canning in Rangoon. Towards the close of January, 1812, he was asked to proceed towards Amarapura,<sup>4</sup> but his departure was delayed by the tension due to the appearance of Burmese troops on the Chittagong frontier. The ship (*Ambayna*) and the cruiser (*Malabar*) sent by the Supreme Government<sup>5</sup> arrived near Rangoon on March 18, 1812. It was with some difficulty that Captain Canning secured the permission of the Viceroy of Pegu to bring the ships to the shore. The arrival of these ships excited

1 S. C., March 10, 1812, No. 13.

2 S. C., March 20, 1812, No. 16.

3 S. C., April 17, 1812, No. 59; May 8, 1812, No. 20.

4 P. C., February 21, 1812, No. 30.

5 See p. 157.



wide-spread alarm in Rangoon. Many Burmese officials believed that war had already broken out on the Arakan frontier and that the ships intended to capture Rangoon. The Viceroy of Pegu remained friendly, but took the precaution of collecting troops. Captain Canning was requested to proceed to the capital, but he refused on the ground that he had been asked by his Government to remain in Rangoon till further orders. The apprehension of the Burmese officials was increased by the arrival, on March 29, of a British schooner in Rangoon. Captain Canning observes, "The utmost degree of alarm prevailed. The bazars, at that hour much thronged, were deserted; many of the inhabitants prepared to rise in favour of the English, many to oppose them, and still more for the purpose of general plunder, and many actually left the town and sought refuge in the jungles". The Viceroy took prompt measures to pacify the population and invited Captain Canning to see him. The interview was not pleasant, although nothing untoward happened. Two English officers of the schooner were, however, 'confined under lock and key' for a few hours in the custom house. Some other petty incidents and reliable reports convinced Captain Canning that the Burmese officials intended to put him 'under restraint'. He left the city and established his residence on the *Malabar*—not with-

out a demonstration of hostility from some Burmese troops and war boats stationed at the port. The Viceroy tried to conciliate him by sending the sailors of the war boats to apologise for their conduct. Captain Canning was 'entirely satisfied' and resumed friendly communications with the Viceroy. He did not return to Bengal at once, because such a step was likely to be considered by the Burmese officials as 'nearly tantamount to a declaration of war'.<sup>1</sup>

Early in May the Governor-General ordered Captain Canning to return to Calcutta; the purpose of his Mission had already been accomplished by the explanation which he had offered about the measures adopted by the British Government in connection with Kingbering's rebellion. Burmese troops had left the frontier, and the departure of the British Agent was no longer likely to be interpreted in Rangoon as a demonstration of hostility.<sup>2</sup> Before receiving this order Captain Canning had to pass through some unpleasant incidents. The Burmese officers seized some tents belonging to the British Mission; these were returned only when Captain Canning positively told the Viceroy of Pegu that he would leave Rangoon immediately if British property was seized in that

<sup>1</sup> S. C., May 8, 1812, No. 23

<sup>2</sup> S. C., May 8, 1812, No. 25

way. Some tombs and monuments, including those on the graves of some 'respectable Europeans', were destroyed in order to collect bricks for erecting fortifications. There was so much agitation and so many rumours in Rangoon that Captain Canning became very anxious for the safety of British subjects living in the city. The Viceroy of Pegu demanded the surrender of the fugitive *Mag* chiefs. Captain Canning refused to commit himself, on the excuse that he had no positive information about the matter. But he argued that the disturbance in Arakan was solely due to 'the oppressive and tyrannical government' of the Burmese Governor of that province—a remark approved by the Burmese *vakil* who had recently visited Colonel Morgan—and claimed that the misconduct of that official should not be used as an excuse for demanding the surrender of the fugitives. He said, " ... the surrender of persons to certain destruction who seek refuge in the dominions of any great power must always be deemed an act of extreme concession." Then at the Viceroy's request he moved from the ship to a convenient house on the bank of the river, which 'in point of security was not inferior to a residence on board ship.'<sup>1</sup> The resumption of friendly intercourse was soon disturbed by the attempt of the

1 S. C., June 12, 1812, No. 22.

Burmese to detain some British ships, to seize Captain Canning's official correspondence and to confine the family of a British subject. These disputes were, however, satisfactorily settled.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the close of May, 1812, Captain Canning came to the conclusion that the time had come for him to proceed to Amarapura. He had reasons to believe that a satisfactory solution of the question of the refugees could be found only by direct negotiations with the King. The ungovernable temper of the old King was kept in restraint by the tact of the heir-apparent (his grandson) who took a prominent part in the management of affairs. During Captain Canning's former visit to the capital the heir-apparent had been very friendly to him. There was no reason to believe that his attitude had changed. His immediate return to Bengal, Captain Canning thought, would frustrate the object of his mission by leaving everything in a state of uncertainty and lead the Burmese to believe that hostilities were imminent.<sup>2</sup>

In the meanwhile Kingbering had made another attempt to invade Arakan. How he escaped from British custody and collected a large body of fol-

1 S. C., June 12, 1812, No. 24.

2 S. C., June 12, 1812, No. 24.

lowers is unknown.<sup>1</sup> The Burmese army had already left Arakan. Kingbering utilised this opportunity, crossed the Naf with about 500 followers and occupied a stockade at Mangdu. Colonel Morgan tried in vain to arrest him and to check his progress.<sup>2</sup> The Government authorised the Magistrate of Chittagong to offer a reward for the capture of Kingbering and his principal associates and to issue a proclamation<sup>3</sup> to the effect that any one who directly assisted Kingbering would be punished 'according to law.'<sup>4</sup>

Captain Canning was ordered to wait in Rangoon and not to proceed towards Amarapura. "The recent occurrences in Chittagong," he was informed, "would furnish new sources of irritation and new grounds for arrogant demands, which by your presence at the capital the Court would be enabled to urge with all advantage to be derived from the relinquishment of the independent and commanding position which you have the means of maintaining at Rangoon; and, above all, the Government and you would be deprived of the benefit of a speedy and regular communication

1 S. C., June 12, 1812, No. 11.

2 S. C., June 12, 1812, No. 19.

3 Text of the proclamation will be found in S. C., July 4, 1812, No. 34.

4 S. C., June 12, 1812, No. 20.

between the Mission and the Presidency." He was instructed to explain the measures adopted by the British authorities to prevent the *Mag* refugees from crossing the Naf and "to signify that this Government is willing to afford, to the extent that may be practicable, the co-operation of its troops in quelling the insurrection headed by Kingbering." If this assurance failed to conciliate the Burmese officials in Rangoon and Captain Canning found himself threatened by insult or injury, he was authorised 'to retire without awaiting the result of a reference to the Presidency.' With regard to the question of surrendering Kingbering, in case he was captured by the British authorities, the Governor-General was not prepared to give up 'a fellow creature, whatever be the magnitude of his offences, to the summary decrees of vindictive cruelty;' yet he would very reluctantly agree to satisfy the Burmese demand if it was the only alternative to war. Lord Minto knew that victory could be easily purchased in a war with Burma: "The coasts and provinces of that country are certainly exposed to our attack without the means of defence, and the only part of our territory accessible to the Burmese forces might with ease be effectually protected." Even then he considered the extension of territories to the eastward and southward to be 'more burdensome than beneficial.' His only purpose

was to check 'the arrogance and presumption' of the Burmese Court.<sup>1</sup>

This despatch was soon followed by another, in which Captain Canning was informed that Kingbering's expedition into Arakan had totally failed and that Kingbering and his followers had been driven back into Chittagong. The Burmese troops who dispersed them did not cross the Naf, nor did they demand their surrender. Captain Canning was now asked to return to Calcutta; he was directed 'on no account' to proceed to Amarapura.<sup>2</sup>

Although Captain Canning was satisfied with the friendly attitude of the Rangoon officials,<sup>3</sup> the Governor of Arakan created new difficulties by writing an 'insolent' letter to the Magistrate of Chittagong. The Magistrate was directed by the Government to send a firm reply.<sup>4</sup> About the same time Kingbering himself precipitated a crisis by adopting predatory practices.<sup>5</sup> In August, 1812, the Magistrate of Chittagong reported, "The whole of the southern part of the district is in a state of confusion." The officers of the *thana* at Tek Naf were compelled to

1 S. C., June 12, 1812, No. 25.

2 S. C., June 25, 1812, No. 47.

3 S. C., June 25, 1812, No. 46.

4 S. C., July 17, 1812, No. 23.

5 S. C., August 14, 1812, No. 17.

abandon their post, and the *Mags* 'carried all before them.' The Magistrate had to call for military assistance.<sup>1</sup> He also tried to seize two *Mag* Chiefs by treachery, but his plan was condemned by the Government in the strongest terms.<sup>2</sup>

Captain Canning left Rangoon early in August, 1812.<sup>3</sup> His proceedings received the fullest approbation of the Government. He had succeeded, in the opinion of the Governor-General in Council, not only in convincing the Burmese Court that Kingbering had received no encouragement or assistance from the Company's officers, but also in 'inspiring the Burmese authorities with juster notions of the character, principles and powers of the British Government.'<sup>4</sup> The following chapters will reveal how far these 'juster notions' influenced the policy of the Burmese Court.

Meanwhile the depredations of Kingbering remained unchecked.<sup>5</sup> The Magistrate was directed to take strong measures for 'the seizure of Kingbering's person and that of his principal adherents.'<sup>6</sup>

1 S. C., August 21, 1812, No. 17, 23; September 11, 1812, No. 19.

2 S. C., September 11, 1812, No. 25.

3 S. C., September 11, 1812, No. 1.

4 S. C., September 25, 1812, No. 12.

5 S. C., October 16, 1812, No. 51; October 23, 1812, No. 53; December 4, 1812, No. 33.

6 S. C., December 4, 1812, No. 34.



In December, 1812, Kingbering made another attempt upon Arakan, but the adventure ended in his 'total defeat.'<sup>1</sup> A Burmese force consisting of about 2,000 armed men entered into British territory 'for the professed purpose of searching for and seizing the insurgent *Mags*.' The Magistrate of Chittagong asked Colonel Dick, officer commanding in that district, to expel the Burmese from British territory 'either by fair means or by compulsion.'<sup>2</sup> Ensign Hall was despatched at the head of some troops to Rutnapullung, but he found no Burmese troops there.<sup>3</sup> It was reported that they were 'searching in the woods and hills on the boundary for Kingbering and the insurgent *Mags*.'<sup>4</sup> The Governor of Arakan advanced with his troops as far as Mangdu and sent a friendly letter to the Magistrate of Chittagong,<sup>5</sup> inviting his co-operation against the fugitives. The Magistrate sent a conciliatory reply.<sup>6</sup> He was directed by the Government not to withdraw any part of the force assembled on the southern frontier as long as the army of Arakan remained at Mangdu. He was also

1 S. C., January 8, 1813, No. 5.

2 S. C., January 15, 1813, No. 31.

3 S. C., January 15, 1813, No. 34.

4 S. C., January 15, 1813, No. 35.

5 S. C., January 15, 1813, No. 34.

6 S. C., January 15, 1813, No. 27.

asked to demand from the Governor of Arakan a formal disapproval of the conduct of his men who penetrated into British territory. The Governor was to be informed that British troops would co-operate with him for the apprehension of Kingbering on the distinct understanding that neither British nor Burmese troops would cross the Naf without a 'specific invitation' of the other party. But the Magistrate was directed 'to avoid any expression that can be construed into an intention to deliver Kingbering or his adherents, in the event of their apprehension, into the hands of the Burmese Government.'<sup>1</sup>

To a letter written according to these instructions the Governor of Arakan sent a civil reply: he requested that the rebel leaders should be captured and surrendered, but he offered no apology for the violation of British territory by his troops.<sup>2</sup> A few days later he sent another letter, in which he stated that his troops did not violate British territory.<sup>3</sup> In the meanwhile wild rumours were afloat: it was said that a Burmese army, about 7,000 strong, was advancing to the Naf;<sup>4</sup> that a son of the King was coming from

1 S. C., January 29, 1813, No. 30.

2 S. C., February 11, 1813, No. 17.

3 S. C., February 26, 1813, No. 12.

4 S. C., February 19, 1813, No. 62.

Amarapura to lead an expedition against the British;<sup>1</sup> etc. These rumours were not considered creditable by the Magistrate of Chittagong, but he took adequate precautionary measures.<sup>2</sup>

Although the Burmese had no real intention of beginning hostilities, they persisted in pressing their demand for the surrender of the fugitives. Envoys were sent to Calcutta. Captain Canning tried to convince them that their demand was unjust, but his arguments had 'little weight' with them. They were afraid that they—and other members of their families—would lose their heads if they returned to Amarapura 'without having effected the object of their mission.'<sup>3</sup> While the envoys were trying to save their own heads by securing those of the refugees, Kingbering was trying to lead another expedition into Arakan, and his followers were 'plundering the inhabitants of the plains' from their shelter in hills and jungles.<sup>4</sup> With great reluctance Lord Minto authorised the Magistrate of Chittagong to declare that if Kingbering invaded Arakan again and fell into the hands of the British Government, he would be surrendered to the Burmese. Even now he expected

1 S. C., March 12, 1813, No. 32.

2 S. C., March 12, 1813, No. 32.

3 S. C., August 20, 1813, No. 19.

4 S. C., September 10, 1813, No. 16.

that such a declaration would restrain Kingbering and make it unnecessary for British authorities to hand him over to his cruel enemies. So he directed the Magistrate of Chittagong not to communicate in official letters to the Governor of Arakan the decision of the Government to surrender Kingbering.<sup>1</sup> A few weeks later Lord Minto left India, and Kingbering troubled him no more.

Lord Hastings<sup>2</sup> reached Calcutta on October 4, 1813, and one of the pending problems which claimed his attention was the fate of the *Mag* refugees. From their experience in their own country the Burmese envoys expected that the new Governor-General would reverse his predecessor's proceedings and agree to give up the refugees. It was not long before they were disillusioned.<sup>3</sup> A new envoy arrived,<sup>4</sup> probably to emphasize the seriousness of the business. All the envoys left Calcutta as soon as they received a definite reply, and it was reported that 'the refusal of the Supreme Government to surrender the refugee

1 S. C., September 10, 1813, No 20.

2 Although Lord Moira was created Lord Hastings in February, 1817, we have, for the sake of convenience, called him Lord Hastings throughout this chapter.

3 S. C., October 29, 1813, No 23.

4 S. C., October 29, 1813, No. 24.

*Mags* was not received by the local authorities in Pegu with any apparent degree of irritation.<sup>1</sup>

The plundering raids of the *Mags* continued to disturb the peaceful inhabitants of the plains. The Magistrate of Chittagong reported that the ordinary police could not control the situation. Some troops were posted at important villages. It was reported that Kingbering had given up his plan of invading Arakan: he could not collect an adequate force.<sup>2</sup> In January, 1814, a small Burmese force assembled at Mangdu. Although the Magistrate of Chittagong apprehended that they would enter British territory in pursuit of Kingbering and his partisans,<sup>3</sup> the Government did not take so serious a view of the situation.<sup>4</sup> Lord Hastings was determined to capture Kingbering. As British troops could not penetrate 'the remote and insalubrious part of the country which he had lately occupied,' the Governor-General was prepared 'to permit small bodies of Burmese troops

1 P. C., January 28, 1814, No. 51.

2 S. C., December 17, 1813, No. 56. The Magistrate of Chittagong wrote, "I cannot imagine that any of the *Mags* can be so absurd as to expect to reconquer their country under such a leader as Kingbering, who, on every occasion when a battle is expected, is the first to make his escape" (S. C., April 15, 1814, No. 30).

3 S. C., January 14, 1814, No. 12.

4 S. C., January 14, 1814, No. 19.

to enter the hills and jungles ... under a solemn promise that they shall on no account enter the plains and cultivated parts of the country.' The Magistrate of Chittagong was authorised to convey this offer to the Governor of Arakan.<sup>1</sup> Before the proposal could be communicated to the Governor, Kingbering invaded Arakan and captured the stockade at Mangdu.<sup>2</sup> The Burmese succeeded in dispersing the invaders within a few days.<sup>3</sup>

After these troubles the Magistrate of Chittagong sent an agent to the Governor of Arakan. The latter accepted the proposal suggested by the Governor-General and expressed the desire that the British Government would furnish Burmese troops with ammunition and provisions when they entered British territory.<sup>4</sup> The Government of Bengal refused to accede to this request.<sup>5</sup>

In June, 1814, it was discovered that the Burmese were intriguing with the Sikhs. A confidential agent of the King of Burma proceeded to Northern India in the guise of a merchant. His purpose was to collect information about the military

1 S. C., January 14, 1814, No. 19.

2 S. C., April 7, 1814, No. 33.

3 S. C., April 7, 1814, No. 30.

4 P. C., June 17, 1814, No. 71, 72.

5 P. C., June 17, 1814, No. 74.

resources of the Company and to establish, if possible, friendly relations with Ranjit Singh.<sup>1</sup>

Captain Fago, officer commanding at Ramu, suggested a plan for maintaining peace in the hilly areas infested by *Mag* refugees. He advocated the recruitment of *Mags* as soldiers and the formation of 8 or 10 companies, 'partly of *Mags* and partly of the other natives of this part of the district.' He expected that this step would secure the loyalty of the *Mags* and restore the prosperity of the fertile area devastated

1 P. C., June 23, 1814, No. 42; January 30, 1818, No. 85-86. It seems that the Burmese really succeeded in establishing friendly relations with the Sikhs. In 1823 some Sikhs, who claimed to be agents deputed by Ranjit Singh, came to Amara-pura. They said that "they had suffered ship-wreck in crossing a river, and lost the letter and presents which they had from their master". The object of their 'mission' was 'a treaty, offensive and defensive, to drive the British out of India.' The Burmese received them honourably, but during the war with the British (1824-1826) they became suspected and even imprisoned for a short time. "They were finally sent back with letters, and a sum of money given to each individual." (Wilson, *Documents Illustrative of the Burmese War*, No. 174C). It is interesting to note that in 1838 Ranjit Singh referred to the courage of the Burmese in conversation with a member of the British Mission then visiting him. He said. "I have heard that they fight well, and beat your Sipahis." (Osborne, *Court and Camp of Runjeet Singh*, p. 105).

The Burmese also came into touch with the Marathas. (S. C., January 9, 1818, No. 69, 72).

by them. "The improvement of the country," he remarked, "will very soon repay the expense of the corps."<sup>1</sup> This proposal was not approved by the Magistrate of Chittagong. He suspected that *Mags* soldiers would not agree to serve against their own countrymen, for all *Mags* were 'generally united in the scheme of trying to remain in Arakan by some means or other, i.e., either by their prowess or by engaging the British Government in a war with Burma.' Those *Mags* who agreed to enlist would do so merely 'for the sake of being entrusted with arms with which they would desert on the first opportunity.'<sup>2</sup>

The advent of the rainy season made the southern part of the Chittagong district so unhealthy that the troops stationed at Ramu had to be partially withdrawn. This made it possible for the *Mags* to renew their aggressions in the plains.<sup>3</sup> Their objects were two-fold: 'to threaten the peaceable *Mags* who inhabit the plains in case they do not attend them, and to plunder all boats that pass them, and occasionally on shore.'<sup>4</sup>

In September, 1814, the Governor of Arakan

1 P. C., June 10, 1814, No. 61.

2 P. C., July 12, 1814, No. 9.

3 P. C., July 12, 1814, No. 72; August 16, 1814, No. 62.

4 P. C., August 16, 1814, No. 64.



wrote a very unsatisfactory letter to the Magistrate of Chittagong, and an agent sent to Arakan by the latter returned with a report that the Burmese were making preparations for war.<sup>1</sup> The agent was forcibly detained for 20 days under a guard. The Government considered it to be 'a gross insult' to the Company. The Magistrate of Chittagong was directed to stop correspondence with the Governor of Arakan.<sup>2</sup>

In November, 1814, some Burmese envoys appeared in Calcutta.<sup>3</sup> They were followed a few months later by another envoy, one Felix Cary.<sup>4</sup> The Government refused to recognize him as an accredited envoy, because he was not mentioned as such in the letters which he had brought from Amara-pura. He was merely instructed to purchase 'religious books, sacred writings and ancient histories.'<sup>5</sup> Another deputation arrived in Calcutta in October, 1815.<sup>6</sup>

Early in 1815 Kingbering died. He was making preparations for leading another expedition into

1. P. C., October 4, 1814, No. 35. This report was confirmed by others. (P. C., November 4, 1814, No. 50, 52).

2. P. C., October 4, 1814, No. 38.

3. P. C., November 4, 1814, No. 54.

4. P. C., April 18, 1815, No. 79.

5. P. C., October 7, 1815, No. 88, 93, 94, 95, 102, 106.

6. P. C., January 13, 1816, No. 88.

Arakan, but his death disorganised his party. It was reported that his adherents 'manifested a disposition to return to their homes and resume their former peaceful occupations.'<sup>1</sup> The Magistrate of Chittagong was directed to allow them to return without molestation to their homes, although he was forbidden to adopt 'any active measures' for settling them in any particular part of the Chittagong district.<sup>2</sup> But peace was not restored in that district. The *Mags* found a new leader in Ryngjeing, who had been a rival of Kingbering. This leader was allowed to return and settle in the cultivated parts of the district, but he preferred to create disturbances.<sup>3</sup> His wife and children were captured by the Magistrate of Chittagong and strong measures were adopted to seize him.<sup>4</sup> Charipo, a son-in-law of Kingbering and one of Ryngjeing's principal followers, voluntarily delivered himself to the Magistrate, who placed him in confinement. Within a few days he escaped.<sup>5</sup> Distress and want compelled Ryngjeing to surrender

<sup>1</sup> P. C., November 4, 1814, No. 46; December 13, 1814, No. 24; March 21, 1815, No. 76.

<sup>2</sup> P. C., May 30, 1815, No. 53.

<sup>3</sup> P. C., May 30, 1815, No. 53; October 4, 1815, No. 35; February 10, 1816, No. 69.

<sup>4</sup> P. C., February 10, 1816, No. 69.

<sup>5</sup> P. C., March 2, 1816, No. 133, 134.

himself at last (May, 1816).<sup>1</sup> Some of his followers were punished; others, against whom no positive evidence was available, were released.<sup>2</sup> Ryngjeing and five of his chief assistants were detained as prisoners of State.<sup>3</sup> Tranquillity was at last restored in the southern part of the district of Chittagong. Charipo was captured in August, 1817, with 96 associates. The Magistrate of Chittagong and a Judge of circuit conducted an enquiry and found them guilty of raids into Arakan and dacoities within British territory.

In April, 1817, a son of the Governor of Ramree<sup>4</sup> arrived at Chittagong with a letter<sup>5</sup> from his father, purporting to be written under the immediate orders of the King, and containing a demand for the surrender of Arakan rebels. He was 'paid every mark of civility' and 'expressed himself as much pleased with his reception.' The Magistrate expressed his surprise that the demand for the *Mags* should be renewed at a time 'when all was quiet on the frontier and there

1 P. C., June 1, 1816, No. 48.

2 P. C., July 27, 1816, No. 19.

3 P. C., July 27, 1816, No. 21.

4 The Governor of Ramree was at that time officiating as 'the head of the Government of the four provinces,' for the Governor of Arakan had gone to Amarapura.

5 Wilson, *Documents Illustrative of the Burmese War*, No. 4.

was no probability of any renewal of disturbance there.' The Governor's son replied that, although Kingbering was dead, there were many relations and adherents of his, 'who would doubtless take any opportunity that presented itself of reviving troubles.' He had to return to Arakan with a letter addressed to the Viceroy of Pegu, in which the Governor-General observed, "The British Government cannot, without a violation of the principles of justice on which it invariably acts, deliver up a body of people who have sought its protection and some of whom have resided within its territory for thirty years; but ..... no restraint is imposed on the voluntary return of these people to their native country, although no authority would be exercised for the purpose of effecting their removal from the British territories."<sup>1</sup>

Lord Hastings felt uneasy at this sudden revival of the question of the refugees. The Magistrate of Chittagong was directed to ascertain the real motive of the Burmese and to find out 'whether any preparations or arrangements are in progress in Arakan indicative of a design to attempt the seizure of the *Mags* by violence or of any other hostile purpose.'<sup>2</sup> He reported, after enquiries, that some 'hostile irruption'

<sup>1</sup> P. C., May 10, 1817, No. 34, 36. S. C., June 28, 1817, No. 5.

<sup>2</sup> P. C., May 10, 1817, No. 37.

would probably take place, but whether it would be directed against the British, or merely the *Mags*, he could not say.<sup>1</sup> He recommended the adoption of precautionary measures and suggested that additional troops and a cruiser should be despatched to Chittagong.<sup>2</sup> Lord Hastings approved this suggestion. Troops were ordered to be sent to Chittagong and a cruiser and two gun-boats were to be stationed on the coast, so as to provide against a sudden descent by sea. Fortunately the alarm proved to be premature. Subsequent reports from the Magistrate<sup>3</sup> led Lord Hastings to the conclusion that 'the highest authorities of Ava' did not entertain warlike designs.<sup>4</sup>

Towards the close of 1817 Burmese troops appeared on the frontiers of Cachar and Sylhet, and in January, 1818, the demand for the surrender of the refugees was renewed. Confused reports began to pour in, indicating hostile designs on the part of the Burmese.<sup>5</sup> In April, 1818, 'the son of the Governor of Ramree again came to Chittagong. He

1 S. C., June 28, 1817, No. 7. S. C., July 25, 1817, No. 28.

2 S. C., June 28, 1817, No. 5.

3 S. C., August 22, 1817, No. 37. P. C., September 12, 1817, No. 52.

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 3.

5 S. C., January 9, 1818, No. 69, 70, 71, 72. P. C., January 30, 1818, No. 84, 86.

was the bearer of a letter from his father, in which the Governor-General was asked, in insolent language, to surrender to the Burmese King 'the countries of Chittagong, Dacca, Murshidabad and Cossimbazar.'<sup>1</sup> Lord Hastings treated this 'improper' demand as an unauthorised act of the Governor of Ramree.<sup>2</sup> The matter ended there. Although the Governor's letter was not disavowed by the Burmese Court, no repetition of the demand was made. It is impossible to ascertain from the available documents whether the Burmese really wanted to provoke hostilities. Some writers believe that the outbreak of war was prevented only by the defeat of the Marathas in 1818, the victory of the Siamese and the death of King Bodawpaya in 1819.<sup>3</sup>

1 S. C., May 1, 1818, No. 104.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 7. *Private Journal of the Marquis of Hastings*, Vol. II, p. 341.

3 Wilson, *Historical Sketch of the Burmese War*. Major Ross-of-Bladensburg, *The Marquess of Hastings* (Rulers of India Series), p. 184.

## CHAPTER VI

### TROUBLES IN ASSAM (1795-1824)

In Chapter I we have traced the course of events in Assam up to the death of Gaurinath Singh (December, 1794). The condition of the country at that time was miserable. As Gait says, "Where the Moamarias held sway, whole villages were destroyed, and the inhabitants, robbed of all their possessions, were forced to flee the country, or to eke out a precarious existence by eating wild fruits and roots and the flesh of unclean animals. In Lower Assam the Bengal mercenaries and gangs of marauding banditti who flocked into the province caused similar, though less widespread, havoc, while where Gaurinath himself had power, all persons belonging to the Moamaria communion were subjected to all manner of persecutions and barbarities."<sup>1</sup>

After Gaurinath's death Purnananda, the Burha Gohain, treacherously murdered the Bar Barua, his most powerful rival, and placed on the throne an illegitimate descendant of Rudra Singh's (King of Assam, 1696-1714) brother.<sup>2</sup> The new King, known

<sup>1</sup> *History of Assam*, p. 212.

<sup>2</sup> We follow *Tungkhungia Buranji* (Text edited by S. K.

before his accession by the humble name of Kinaram, assumed the title of Kamaleswar Singh. He remained the nominal King till his death in 1810, but Puranananda became the *de facto* ruler of the country. He was an able man. He suppressed many insurrections and to some extent restored the prosperity of the country. But he was a tyrant to his rivals and enemies.<sup>1</sup>

On his accession Kamaleswar Singh wrote a friendly letter to the Governor-General,<sup>2</sup> who sent a conciliatory reply.<sup>3</sup> This was followed by repeated requests for military assistance against the Bengal mercenaries who were committing depredations in different parts of the country in defiance of Purnananda's attempts to restore peace.<sup>4</sup> Sir John Shore refused to send another expedition to Assam,<sup>5</sup> but he

Bhuyan, para 257) and a letter of Gaurinath's wife, Queen Kamaleswari. (S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages, Vol. I, Bengali Letters*, letter No. 101). Gait (*History of Assam*, p. 211) merely says that Kinaram was a descendant of Gadadhar Singh.

1 *Tungkhungia Buranji*, text, paras 257-342.

2 P. C., March 2, 1795, No. 28.

3 P. C., March 2, 1795, No. 30.

4 S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages, Vol. I, Bengali Letters*, letter No. 81, 82. P. C., July 29, 1796, No. 13; November 4, 1796, No. 55; November 14, 1796, No. 32; February 6, 1797, No. 22, 23; February 20, 1797, No. 32.

In the Bengali documents the mercenaries are called *Dundias*.

5 An officer named Captain Thomas Darrah was deputed to



supplied the Assamese envoys with arms. The following contemporary account about the mercenaries is interesting: "These bandits are represented to be a set of vagabonds and dacoits who, having or choosing no means of existence but plunder, rally under the standard of any one who has influence enough to collect them, and forming themselves into parties in the neighbourhood of Assam towards the close of rains, take advantage of the fall of the waters to enter the country where they oblige the Raja or his officers to entertain them as Sepoys upon their own terms, by threatening to overrun the country if refused, and, when entertained, act wholly without subordination and commit every species of outrage upon the defenceless inhabitants. ... The enormities committed by these people are represented as shocking to humanity. Rapine and murder are practised without control. The country is deserted. Wherever they appear cultivation is impeded and commerce almost wholly at a stand."<sup>1</sup> Surely it was a duty of the British Government to

suppress the mercenaries in the Jogighopa and Goalpara region. The experiment proved successful, and henceforth a force was permanently stationed at Jogighopa. (S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages*, Vol. I, *Bengali Letters*, letters No. 75, 81).

1. *Foreign Department Miscellaneous*, No. 8. *Memoranda*. Vol. I, No. 17.

take adequate measures for preventing these people from crossing the frontier of Bengal. A detachment of Sepoys was stationed at Jogighopa<sup>1</sup> and orders were issued to the Commissioner at Cooch Behar and the Magistrates of Rangpur and Dinajpur to watch and regulate the movements of the mercenaries.<sup>2</sup> These measures proved effective.<sup>3</sup>

In 1806 Queen Kamaleswari, wife of Gaurinath Singh, sent an application to the Governor-General against Purnananda. She stated that Kamaleswar Singh had no title to the throne, that he was nothing but a puppet in the Burha Gohain's hands, and that peace and prosperity might be restored to Assam if the British Government assisted Brajanath Singh, a descendant of Rajeswar Singh (King of Assam, 1751-1769), in securing the throne. The Queen was at that time living in Chilmari (in the district of Rangpur) and enjoying a pension granted by the Company. Brajanath Singh had fled from Assam and joined her there.<sup>4</sup> The Governor-General does not seem to have taken any notice of her request.

1 An important military post near the Bengal-Assam frontier.

2 P. C., May 11, 1798, No. 16.

3 P. C., April 15, 1799, No. 5; May 3, 1799, No. 8.

4 S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages*, Vol. 1, *Bengali Letters*, letter No. 101. S. C., July 17, 1806, No. 111.

The Bar Phukan, whose gallantry in suppressing some insurrections<sup>1</sup> had been rewarded with the title of *Pratāpa-ballava*, realised that it was not possible to restore peace and prosperity in Assam without British assistance. So he suggested that Assam should follow the example of Cooch Behar and become a tributary state under the protection of the Company. Purnananda rejected this proposal.<sup>2</sup>

Kamaleswar Singh was succeeded by his brother, Chandrakanta Singh. At the time of his accession he was a boy of 14 years. Purnananda continued to govern the Kingdom as before. In June, 1814, some conspirators tried to murder him, probably with the connivance of the King.<sup>3</sup> The plot failed. One of

1 Specially those of the *Dundias*.

2 Gait (*History of Assam*, p. 220) says that the proposal was rejected "as it was thought that it would be very unpopular with the people." Dr. S. K. Bhuyan (*Tungkhungia Buranji*, Eng. trans., p. 198) says, "Purnananda had firm faith in his own powers, and thought that he would be able to restore his country to peace and orderly government without the intervention of any exterior power. The Barphukan's proposals were shelved, as being pessimistic and premature." No reference to this episode is found in English documents.

3 In 1815 Chandrakanta sent a letter to the Governor-General, asking for military assistance against the Burha Gohain. He stated that the Burha Gohain had murdered Gaurinath and Kamaleswar under the excuse of administering medicine, and was at that time trying to murder him. (S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages*, Vol. I, *Bengali Letters*, letter No. 140A).

the sympathisers of this plot was Badan Chandra, who had recently succeeded *Pratāpa-ballava* as Bar Phukan. He was not only a rival of the Burha Gohain; his administration at Gauhati was very oppressive.<sup>1</sup> So Purnananda tried to arrest him; but a timely warning<sup>2</sup> enabled him to seek shelter in Bengal. He visited Calcutta and tried to secure British assistance against Purnananda. His request was not complied with.<sup>3</sup> In Calcutta he met a Burmese *vakil*, who probably advised him to address his prayers to King Bodawpaya. He went to Amarapura, and after waiting there for 16 months, succeeded in persuading the King to send an expedition to Assam.<sup>4</sup>

A large Burmese army appeared in Assam in March, 1817. Assamese troops were defeated in the

1 "One of their (i.e. Badan Chandra's sons) favourite pranks was to make an elephant intoxicated with *bhāng*, and let it loose in Gauhati, while they followed at a safe distance, and roared with laughter as the brute demolished houses and killed the people who were unlucky enough to come in its way." (Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 221).

2 Badan Chandra's daughter was married to Purnananda's son. She warned her father-in-law.

3 *Foreign Department Miscellaneous*, No. 11. *Memoranda*, Vol. IV, No. 31.

4 S. K. Bhuyan, *Tungkhungia Buranji* (Eng. trans.), pp. 201-204.

For the Burmese version of Burmese activities in Assam, see *Konbaungset Yazawin*, Vol. II, pp. 343-368.

battles of Ghiladhari and Kathalbari (east of the Dihing). In the meanwhile Purnananda died; Ruchinath, his son and successor, fled to Gauhati. The Burmese occupied Jorhat (which was then the capital), placed Badan Chandra in power and retired to their own country (April, 1817). Chandrakanta Singh conciliated them by offering for the Burmese King's *barem* a princess of the royal family<sup>1</sup> and submitted to the rule of the triumphant Bar Phukan. But the King's mother secretly joined Badan Chandra's enemies and had him assassinated. Invitations were sent to Ruchinath to come to Jorhat and assume the reins of government. He was not, however, prepared to forgive Chandrakanta for his submission to Badan Chandra. So he invited Brajanath Singh<sup>2</sup> to ascend the throne. Brajanath joined him. In February, 1818, Ruchinath occupied Jorhat. It was now discovered that Brajanath was ineligible for the throne, as he had suffered mutilation. So his son Purandar Singh was crowned. "Chandrakanta was seized, and his right ear was slit in order to disqualify him from again sitting on the throne."<sup>3</sup>

1 A sister of Jogeswar Singh, who later on became King. (See p. 190).

2 See p. 185.

3 Gait, *History of Assam*, pp. 222-223. Ś. K. Bhuyan, *Tungkhungia Buranji* (Eng. trans.), pp. 204-206.

Towards these political revolutions in Assam Lord Hastings adopted a policy of neutrality. Ruchinath's prayer for military assistance was rejected, but Brajanath was allowed to proceed from Chilmari to Assam without taking with him 'a military force of any description.'<sup>1</sup> But the Burmese King was not prepared to tolerate the overthrow of his nominees in Assam. Badan Chandra's friends went to Amarapura and appealed to the King. They were probably assisted by the influence of the Assamese princess<sup>2</sup> in the *harem*. A Burmese army under Ala Mingi (or Kio Mingi) appeared in Assam in February, 1819, and secured a decisive victory at Phulpanichiga near the Janji river. Purandar Singh fled to Gauhati and then proceeded to Bengal. Ruchinath followed him there. Chandrakanta joined the Burmese and was reinstated by them. The victors committed terrible atrocities on the helpless Assamese people.<sup>3</sup> Chandrakanta gradually found his position intolerable; so he left the capital in April, 1821, and fled, first to Gauhati and then to Bengal. A Burmese army again invaded

1 P. C., May 31, 1817, No. 91, 92.

2 Interesting details about her may be read in S. K. Bhuyan's *Barphukanar Git* and *Asamar Padya-Buranji*.

3 For details of these atrocities, see Wilson, *Documents*, No. 149; Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy*, Vol. I, p. 423; *Nowgong Gazetteer*, p. 39; Gait, *History of Assam*, pp. 227-228; Harvey, *History of Burma*, p. 298.

Assam and occupied the Brahmaputra valley. In November, 1821, Jogeswar Singh<sup>1</sup> was placed on the throne by the victorious Burmese general, who remained the *de facto* ruler of the country.<sup>2</sup> From his shelter in Bengal Chandrakanta made repeated attempts to re-establish his authority in Assam, and in 1821 he was able temporarily to occupy the western part of the country.

In the meanwhile Purandar Singh had taken shelter at Chilmari and addressed numerous appeals for assistance to the Governor-General. He was prepared either to offer tribute or to cede a part of his Kingdom if British troops assisted him in regaining his throne.<sup>3</sup> Similar appeals were also sent by Ruchinath.<sup>4</sup> They were informed that the British Government did not interfere in the internal affairs of foreign countries. They were, however, permitted to live within British territory as long as they 'conducted

1 A descendant of Gadadhar Singh's (King of Assam, 1681-1696) brother. His selection was due probably to the influence of his sister, who had been sent by Chandrakanta to the Burmese King's *harem*. (P. C., January 26, 1822, No. 77).

2 S. K. Bhuyan, *Tungkhungia Buranjī*, pp. 206-211. Gait, *History of Assam*, pp. 223-225. The Moamarias maintained a precarious independence in the small tract between the Buri Dihing and the Brahmaputra.

3 P. C., July 29, 1820, No. 79, 80.

4 P. C., July 29, 1820, No. 81, 82, 83, 84.

themselves in a quiet and peaceable manner and conformed to the orders of Government.<sup>1</sup> Before his flight from Jorhat (April, 1821) Chandrakanta had repeatedly requested British authorities to surrender Purandar Singh, Ruchinath and their followers. This request was not complied with on the ground that political refugees could not be surrendered.<sup>2</sup>

Unable to attract the sympathy of the British Government, Purandar Singh collected troops with the assistance of one Robert Bruce<sup>3</sup> and made preparations for invading Assam.<sup>4</sup> He requested the Government to allow him to take possession of the arms and ammunition deposited by him at Chilmari and to purchase arms in Calcutta.<sup>5</sup> These requests were not complied with. The Government insisted on the principle 'of not permitting armed bodies to be assembled within our territory for the invasion of any neighbouring state;' but no restriction was placed on Purandar Singh's activities because he used Bhutan as the base of his operations.<sup>6</sup> David Scott,<sup>7</sup> Joint

1 P. C., July 29, 1820, No. 85.

2 P. C., July 29, 1820, No. 88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95.

3 See Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 226, footnote.

4 P. C., March 10, 1821, No. 111, 112.

5 P. C., May 12, 1821, No. 84, 85, 86, 87, 88.

6 P. C., May 12, 1821, No. 88; June 16, 1821, No. 69.

7 Born, 1768: served at Gorakhpur: Judge and Magistrate



Magistrate of Rangpur, who played a leading part in the affairs of Assam during the years 1821-1831, recommended that fire arms should be freely supplied to Purandar Singh in order to enable him to expel the Burmese invaders from Assam. Their atrocities had created such strong feelings of resentment in Assam that Purandar Singh might be expected to drive them away without much difficulty. Such a course, argued Scott, was favourable to the interests of the Company, for the consolidation of Burmese authority in Assam would impose on the British Government the necessity of stationing a considerable force in the unhealthy eastern frontier.<sup>1</sup> This advice was not accepted.

In May, 1821, Purandar Singh<sup>2</sup> penetrated into

of Purnea, 1812-1813, and of Rangpur: Commissioner, in 1823, of Rangpur: then Agent to the Governor-General on the North-Eastern Frontier and Commissioner of Revenue and Circuit in the districts of Assam: died, 1831. (Buckland, *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, pp. 378-379).

For an appreciation of his abilities, see Gait, *History of Assam*, pp. 290-291.

1 P. C., June 16, 1821, No. 69.

2 Ruchinath quarrelled with Purandar and professed friendship with Chandrakanta, but there is reason to believe that he secretly negotiated with Jogeswar as well. (P. C., January 11, 1822, No. 22). He intercepted a Burmese letter in order to conceal his relations with Jogeswar and detained the messengers who carried it. For this offence he was confined by the British authorities. (P. C., January 11, 1822, No. 25; May 17, 1822, No. 79).

Assam through Bijni; but his troops were 'entirely defeated and dispersed'<sup>1</sup> by the followers of Chandrakanta, who was at that time in occupation of the territory west of Gauhati. Bruce, Purandar's commander-in-chief, was taken prisoner and sent to Gauhati.<sup>2</sup> He was released on his agreeing to enter Chandrakanta's service. In September, 1821, Chandrakanta was again compelled by the Burmese to retreat towards Bengal. Fortunately the British authorities allowed him to transport arms and ammunition from Bengal.<sup>3</sup> He occupied Gauhati in January, 1822;<sup>4</sup> but the appearance of a large Burmese army under Maha Bandula in the spring of that year compelled him to take shelter in British territory.<sup>5</sup>

Scott's prophecy about Burmese aggression on the frontier of Bengal<sup>6</sup> did not take long to be ful-

1 After Purandar Singh's defeat (May, 1821), Lord Hastings permitted him 'to procure arms by private means in order to carry them across the frontier and arm his adherents.' (P. C., June 16, 1821, No. 71).

2 P. C., June 16, 1821, No. 70.

3 P. C., December 8, 1821, No. 81, 82.

4 P. C., January 26, 1822, No. 77.

5 P. C., June 14, 1822, No. 47, 50; July 5, 1822, No. 97.

6 Aggressive incidents for which the Burmese were responsible should be judged against the background of the half-hearted, indirect assistance which Purandar and Chandrakanta received from the British authorities. There is no doubt that these Princes

filled. Some Burmese soldiers raided a village in the British *pargana* of Habraghat on November 4, 1821. The terrified inhabitants of the locality left their houses and fled in different directions. Scott requested the Burmese commanding officer to surrender the guilty troops.<sup>1</sup> When the matter was reported to Calcutta, orders were issued for the despatch of troops for the protection of frontier villages.<sup>2</sup> In the meanwhile Burmese aggressions continued—several villages in the above *pargana* were affected—and the Burmese commanding officer informed Scott that he could not surrender the accused without the permission of his superiors.<sup>3</sup> Later on he stated that “his soldiers had by mistake plundered the villages of Habraghat, thinking that they were in Assam ... and that he would afford satisfaction on the receipt of orders” from his superiors.<sup>4</sup> These ‘orders’ apparently never came, for no ‘satisfaction’ was ever afforded.

made an unjustifiable use of Bengal as a base of operations against the Burmese. Sir Edward Gait says, “The Burmese commander sent a long letter to the Governor-General, protesting against the facilities which had been accorded to the Ahom princes and demanding their extradition, but nothing came of it ...” (*History of Assam*, p. 226).

1 P. C., November 28, 1821, No. 3.

2 P. C., November 28, 1821, No. 4.

3 P. C., December 8, 1821, No. 70.

4 P. C., December 8, 1821, No. 71.

In July, 1822, an envoy sent by Maha Bandula arrived at Rangpur (in Bengal).<sup>1</sup> Then he proceeded to Calcutta<sup>2</sup> and formally demanded the surrender of Chandrakanta. The demand was, of course, refused; but steps were taken to prevent the Assamese refugees from creating troubles on the frontier.<sup>3</sup> Local officers at Rangpur reported that they had been unable to ascertain whether Chandrakanta had actually taken shelter there or not. This ignorance, says Gait, was 'apparently due to the corruption' of the 'native subordinates' who had been heavily bribed.<sup>4</sup> After this the Burmese invited Purandar Singh 'to proceed to the frontier, ostensibly for the purpose of enabling them to confer with him on the subject of reinstating him in the Government of Assam as a dependent King of Ava.' Purandar Singh responded to this invitation, but the negotiations failed. The Burmese were not inclined to grant his terms.<sup>5</sup> They then turned to Chandrakanta. He was seized as soon as he reached Jorhat and confined at Rangpur (in

1 P. C., July 26, 1822, No. 49.

2 P. C., December 7, 1822, No. 63.

3 P. C., October 11, 1822, No. 54.

4 *History of Assam*, p. 227.

5 P. C., September 6, 1822, No. 12; November 9, 1822, No. 38.

Assam).<sup>1</sup> Having consolidated their authority in the Brahmaputra valley and crushed their opponents by frightful reprisals,<sup>2</sup> the Burmese adopted a policy of conciliation towards their new subjects. "Rapine and pillage were put a stop to, and no punishment was inflicted without a cause. Officers were again appointed to govern the country; a settled administration was established, and regular taxation took the place of unlimited extortion."<sup>3</sup>

The problem created by the consolidation of Burmese authority in Assam could no longer be evaded. As Scott observed, "The substitution of a warlike, and comparatively speaking, powerful Government in the place of the feeble administration that has hitherto ruled Assam, in a situation so commanding and with such extensive means of offence, will no doubt render it necessary that some permanent measures should be adopted for the security of the frontier and of the country in the lower part of the Brahmaputra, Meghna and Ganges."<sup>4</sup> For the time being the Burmese seemed inclined to maintain

1 Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 229. S. K. Bhuyan, *Tungkhungia Buranji* (Eng. trans.), p. 211.

2 Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*.

3 Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 229.

4 P. C., July 26, 1822, No. 50.

friendly relations with the British Government;<sup>1</sup> but if, in the future, they asserted their claim over Dacca or tried to plunder the rich plains of Northern and Eastern Bengal, it would be difficult to resist them, 'without some other description of force than troops unwilling or unaccustomed to act both as boatmen and soldiers.' Scott suggested that some boats might be fitted out for navigation in the Brahmaputra.<sup>2</sup> In a private letter he gave a lurid picture of the Burmese menace: "There is nothing now to prevent them from sacking Dacca and plundering all the adjoining districts, nor have our troops half the chance of being able to meet or overtake them that we had with the Pindaris, and were they provided plentifully with good fire arms, the superior discipline of our troops would avail us very little in that sort of warfare that may be carried on during half the year in this part of the country in boats ..... As for a knowledge of the rivers in Bengal, our boatmen are far behind the Burmese, for there is not a creek or rivulet navigable in the rains between Chittagong and Hardwar

1 The officer commanding at Goalpara reported that the Burmese 'have instantly paid every attention to the various demands' made by him. (P. C., July 26, 1822, No. 50). In August, 1822, all Burmese troops retired from the frontier, leaving only a small post there. (P. C., August 18, 1822, No. 28).

2 P. C., July 26, 1822, No. 50.

that they are not perfectly acquainted with .....".<sup>1</sup>

In September, 1822, the Burmese occupied a small island in the Brahmaputra near Goalpara. Scott reported the matter to Calcutta, stating that the island formed a part of British territory and suggesting that it was 'impolitic' to submit to Burmese aggression. Lord Amherst directed him to take steps for effecting an amicable settlement.<sup>2</sup>

It is necessary at this stage to turn to the affairs of Cachar. The princes of Cachar claimed descent from Bhima, one of the heroes of the *Mahābhārata*. They ruled almost independently over their principality, although on various occasions they were defeated by the Ahom Kings of Assam and compelled to recognise their suzerainty. Cachar attracted the notice of the East India Company soon after Plassey. In 1763 Captain Verelst reached Cachar *en route* to Manipur and waited at Khaspur and Jaynagar for about a year. Captain Pemberton observes, "From this period, until 1809, we have no trace of any further intercourse with this petty state."<sup>3</sup> The following narrative will show that this statement is not true.

1 P. C., July 26, 1822, No. 51.

2 P. C., September 27, 1822, No. 67, 69.

3 *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India*, p. 188.

The reign of Raja Krishna Chandra (c. 1773-1813) was a period of exceptional troubles. In 1794 he sent a *vakil* to Henry Lodge, Justice of the Peace at Sylhet.<sup>1</sup> He was driven to the hills by an Iranian Muslim adventurer named Aga Muhammad Reza, who gave out that he was the 12th *Imām*, destined to deliver India from the yoke of the British merchants. He was captured and sent to Calcutta by some Sepoys, who had been sent by the British authorities in response to an appeal from the Raja. Shortly afterwards some of these Sepoys were discharged from the service of the Company. They went to Cachar and occupied a part of the country. The Raja appealed to the Magistrate of Sylhet. That officer sent some Sepoys, who succeeded in expelling the adventurers.<sup>2</sup> These circumstances naturally made Krishna Chandra somewhat dependent upon British support. He requested the Governor-General 'to protect him whenever an enemy shall invade his territories, on condition of his paying whatever expence may be incurred on account of the force employed for his defence.'

<sup>1</sup> S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages*, Vol. I, *Bengali Letters*, letter No. 65.

<sup>2</sup> P. C., April 26, 1811, No. 52. See also Lieutenant T. Fisher, *Memoir of the Countries On and Near the Eastern Frontier of Sylhet*. For date, compare Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 360.



The reply was unfavourable: "To issue an order of that nature would be inconsistent with the principles which regulate the conduct of the British Government."<sup>1</sup>

Krishna Chandra was defeated by the Assamese in a war which lasted from 1803 until 1805. During the reign of Gaurinath Singh many Moamaras and other Ahom subjects fled to Cachar. During the reign of Kamaleswar Singh Krishna Chandra was requested to deliver them up. An evasive reply was followed by the outbreak of hostilities. Krishna Chandra conciliated his victorious enemy by sending the customary tribute of horses and elephants.<sup>2</sup>

Krishna Chandra died in 1813. His successor was his brother Govinda Chandra, whom a contemporary observer describes as "a man of weak character and pacific disposition, but tyrannical and avaricious."<sup>3</sup> One of his servants named Tularam rebelled and made himself practically independent in the

1 P. C., August 3, 1801, No. 9, 10; November 30, 1807, No. 37; December 2, 1807, No. 49; April 26, 1811, No. 53.

S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages*, Vol. I, *Bengali Letters*, letters No. 112, 114.

2 S. K. Bhuyan, *Tungkhungia Buranji* (Eng. trans.), pp. 142-145, 155-158, 170-176. Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 251.

3 Lieutenant T. Fisher, *Memoir of the Countries On and Near the Eastern Frontier of Sylhet*.

northern part of Cachar. He was assisted by Ram Singh II, the ruler of Jaintia. Govinda Chandra requested the Governor-General to send him military assistance, but Lord Hastings refused.<sup>1</sup>

Govinda Chandra was soon confronted with a new danger. The Kingdom of Manipur was almost a constant prey to Burmese invasions. It was to assist Jai Singh, Raja of Manipur, to recover the territory occupied by the Burmese that Captain Verelst led a force to Cachar in 1763. The little principality was convulsed by repeated wars of succession after the death of Raja Jai Singh in 1799. In 1806 Chaurjit Singh, one of Jai Singh's sons, ascended the throne, but in 1812 he was expelled by his brother Marjit Singh, who had secured Burmese assistance. Henceforth Chaurjit, Marjit, and their brother, Gambhir Singh, began to play an increasingly important part in the history of Cachar. In 1815, or earlier, Chaurjit demanded Govinda Chandra's assistance against Marjit, but Govinda Chandra refused as he was 'related to both brothers in the same degree.' Chaurjit then went to Calcutta to secure British assistance, but as his application met with no approval there, he took shelter in Jaintiapur and began to con-

1 P. C., May 11, 1816, No. 62, 66.

S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages*, Vol. 1, *Bengali Letters*, letters No. 148, 153, 157.

cert plans for invading Cachar in co-operation with Ram Singh and Tularam. Marjit Singh, not satisfied with his ancestral Kingdom, suddenly invaded Cachar in December, 1817, and temporarily occupied nearly the whole of this principality. With the assistance of Gambhir Singh and some British officers from Sylhet, who were anxious to safeguard the Company's frontier against the threatened incursion of the Manipur troops, Govinda Chandra was able to defeat Marjit. Chaurjit and Tularam took advantage of Govinda Chandra's troubles and began to plunder his territory. Towards the close of the year 1818 the unfortunate Cachar Raja was ousted from his Kingdom and compelled to take shelter in Sylhet. Sometime later, probably in 1819, the Burmese invaded Manipur and expelled Marjit Singh, who had somehow offended them. Marjit came to Cachar and effected a reconciliation with Chaurjit and Gambhir Singh; Cachar remained a prey to their depredations. In 1820 Govinda Chandra proposed that his territory should be amalgamated with the Company's district of Sylhet, for his own efforts to expel the Manipur brothers had proved unavailing.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently a

<sup>1</sup> Sir Edward Gait (*History of Assam*, p. 252) says that Chaurjit assisted Govinda Chandra in repelling the invasion of Marjit Singh, but the English and Bengali documents now available do not corroborate this statement. Sir Edward also implies

quarrel broke out between them. Marjit Singh and Gambhir Singh divided the southern part of Cachar among themselves; Chaurjit took shelter in Sylhet. In May, 1823, Chaurjit requested the British Government to recognise him as the tributary ruler of Cachar. Gambhir Singh also 'professed himself willing and anxious to be considered' as a protected Prince, but he 'showed a marked disinclination to enter into any new and specific engagements.'<sup>1</sup> In 1823 he made a futile attempt to establish himself in Manipur.

Lord Amherst took serious notice of the question of extending British protection to Cachar. There were, he thought, 'several inducements for the British Government to establish its direct authority, or at least a prepondering influence, in Cachar.' In a letter that Gambhir Singh came to Cachar along with Marjit after the latter's expulsion from Manipur by the Burmese. But a Bengali letter (No. 163) written by Govinda Chandra shows that Gambhir Singh was his 'General' in 1818, and in that capacity Gambhir Singh fought against Marjit during the latter's invasion of Cachar.

S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages, Vol. I, Bengali Letters*, letters No. 141, 161, 163, 166, 168.

P. C., January 2, 1819, No. 11; March 13, 1819, No. 144; May 27, 1820, No. 88, 89.

S. C., November 14, 1823, No. 22.

<sup>1</sup> Secret Letter from Supreme Government to Court of Directors, January 9, 1824, paras 8, 9, 18.

written on the eve of the First Anglo-Burmese War these 'inducements' were explained as follows: "One of the easiest passes from Ava into the Company's possessions is through Manipur and Cachar and ... the occupation of the latter is essential to the defence of that pass ... The recent progress of the Burmese arms, and their permanent occupation of Assam, the force stationed in which country it would also contribute to keep in check, gives the possession of Cachar an importance under present circumstances which did not before belong to it."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Burmese occupation of Cachar would give them 'a position which placed the richest portion of the district of Sylhet and the *suddar* station itself'<sup>2</sup> completely at their mercy.'<sup>3</sup> An additional argument was found in the previous relations between Cachar and the Company: "Cachar has been a prey to internal dissensions ... the contentions of the parties struggling for superiority and their appeals to our assistance and support have been a frequent source of trouble and embarrassment ... There seems no other probable mode of appeasing these dissensions than the employ-

1 Secret Letter to Court of Directors, January 9, 1824, para 12.

2 Town of Sylhet.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, p. 242.

ment of our influence for the purpose, and that can only be rendered effective by taking the country openly and decidedly under our protection.”<sup>1</sup>

The ‘inducements’ were strong indeed, but there were difficulties. Did the Burmese consider Cachar as one of their protected states, and would they take offence if British protection was extended to that principality? Lord Amherst found no evidence to show that Cachar had ever been ‘subject or tributary to Ava,’ and ‘felt satisfied’ that Cachar might be taken under British protection ‘without any fear of infringing the rights or claims of the Burmese.’ He went further and remarked, “If the measure be expedient on other grounds, we ought not to deprive ourselves of its advantages from an apprehension of giving umbrage where it cannot with any colour of justice be taken.”<sup>2</sup>

There was one more difficulty: who was to be

<sup>1</sup> Secret Letter to Court of Directors, January 9, 1824, para 12. These elaborate arguments were reviewed unfavourably by the Court of Directors (Secret Letter from Court, August 4, 1824, paras 31-41). Although the ‘military advance’ to Cachar was approved, the extension of British suzerainty over that principality was condemned. The Court observed, “The danger must be near and certain which would justify you in the extension of our frontier or of our influence.”

<sup>2</sup> Secret Letter to Court of Directors, January 9, 1824, paras 10, 11.

recognised as vassal ruler of Cachar? Chaurjit Singh had 'lost all footing in Cachar.' Marjit Singh held 'precarious possession of a small tract.'<sup>1</sup> Gambhir Singh 'had obtained a decided ascendancy';<sup>2</sup> but he intrigued with the Burmese and 'showed a marked disinclination to enter into any new and specific engagements.'<sup>3</sup> So Lord Amherst turned to Govinda Chandra. He had already appealed for assistance to the Burmese,<sup>4</sup> and a Burmese army was advancing from Assam to re-instate him. But he was not unwilling to make terms with the British.<sup>5</sup> So Govinda Chandra was recognised as the protected ruler of Cachar.<sup>6</sup> He agreed to acknowledge allegiance to the

1 Hailakandi, in the modern district of Cachar.

2 Gambhir Singh held the whole of South Cachar, except Hailakandi. North Cachar was held by Tularam. (*Vide* p. 200).

3 Secret Letter to Court of Directors, January 9, 1824, paras 16-21. S. C., November 14, 1823, No. 22; November 28, 1823, No. 6; December 12, 1823, No. 11.

4 S. C., January 17, 1824, No. 4, 6.

5 "The intelligence of Govinda Chandra's repeated negotiations with Burma did not appear to us under all circumstances to demand any alteration of our previous resolution to re-instate him."—Secret Letter to Court of Directors, February 23, 1824, para 39.

6 S. C., December 12, 1823, No. 11; December 19, 1823, No. 21; January 30, 1824, No. 14. Gait says, ".....the local authorities were informed that it was not the intention of the Government to accord support to any particular chief, but merely

Company, to pay a tribute of Rs. 10,000 per annum and to admit British interference in the internal administration of his territory.<sup>1</sup> An alternative plan, less objectionable from the Burmese point of view, was suggested by Scott, who had been appointed (on November 14, 1823) Agent to the Governor-General on the North-East Frontier<sup>2</sup> in addition to his post as Civil Commissioner of Rangpur. In order to give no ostensible cause of offence to the Burmese he proposed that Govinda Chandra should remain independent of both British and Burmese Governments. This proposal was not accepted by the Governor-General.<sup>3</sup> It would have been altogether impossible for Govinda

to take the country under its protection, so far as was necessary to prevent the Burmese from occupying it." He adds, ".....when the Burmese had been driven out, the country was restored..... to the *de jure* ruler Gobind Chandra." (*History of Assam*, p. 252). But in the Secret Letters to the Court of Directors, January 9 and February 23, 1824, we find specific references to 'alliance' with Govinda Chandra and 'resolution to re-instate him.' See also text of the treaty in S. C., April 2, 1824, No. 7.

1 S. C., April 2, 1824, No. 7.

2 Lord Amherst wrote, "He should exercise a general control and superintendence over our political relations and intercourse with the petty states in that quarter, including Sikim, Bhutan, Tibet, Cooch Behar, Bijni, Assam, Cachar, Manipur and Jaintia, and other independent states."

3 Secret Letter to the Court of Directors, February 23, 1824, para 34.



Chandra to preserve his independence against the constant threat of Burmese intervention; so Lord Amherst acted wisely in bringing this defenceless, but strategically important, State under the direct control of the British Government.

The extension of British suzerainty over Cachar was followed by the inclusion of the petty hill state of Jaintia in 'our general system of defensive arrangements for the frontier.'<sup>1</sup> The Burmese claimed that as successors of the Ahom Kings they were entitled to regard the ruler of Jaintia as a vassal prince. Ram Singh was asked to make his submission. Scott had already opened negotiations with him. Although "he was reluctant to compromise his independence by any engagements as long as this could be avoided," the approach of a Burmese army left him without any alternative. Jaintia followed the example of Cachar.<sup>2</sup> Ram Singh agreed to place his territory under the protection of the Company and to admit British interference in his internal administration, but no tribute was demanded from him.<sup>3</sup> He was promised

<sup>1</sup> Secret Letter to the Court of Directors, February 23, 1824, para 38.

<sup>2</sup> S. C., January 17, 1824, No. 4, 6; February 13, 1824, No. 8, 13.

<sup>3</sup> S. C., April 2, 1824, No. 8.

a part of the territory conquered from the Burmese if he co-operated in the military operations against them.<sup>1</sup>

The following extract, long as it is, from a letter written to the Court of Directors by the Governor-General-in-Council in September, 1824, clearly explains the advantages derived by the Burmese from their control over Assam:

“... Such is the nature of the country (i.e., Assam), and the facility of bringing down the largest army by means of the river with the utmost celerity, that should the Burmese at any time determine upon invading the British territory by way of the Brahmaputra, previous intelligence of their designs ... could not be obtained ... in sufficient time to be of any avail, for, on the supposition of an army being sent into Assam for the above purpose, they might reach Dacca in 15 days from the time of their arrival on the banks of the upper part of the river and in 5 from that of their appearance on our frontier at Goalpara. No previous extraordinary collection of boats ... would be required nor any extensive preparations near our frontier that might excite suspicion, as the Burmese soldiers carry nothing with them but their arms, subsisting upon what they can find in the country they pass through, and proceeding after they

1 S. C., April 2, 1824, No. 9.

reach the streams flowing into the Brahmaputra; upon rafts made of bamboos, until they may be able to seize a sufficient number of boats for their accommodation; which is very easily effected in a country where, for four months in the year, the communication from house to house is by water, and where a canoe is as necessary a part of the husbandman's establishment as a plough or a pair of oxen."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 12.

## CHAPTER VII

### LORD AMHERST AND THE FINAL RUPTURE WITH BURMA (1823-1824)

On January 9, 1823, Lord Hastings 'quitted the scene of his brilliant labours.' There was an interval of more than seven months between his departure and the arrival of Lord Amherst.<sup>1</sup>

King Bodawpaya died in 1819. His successor was his grandson, Bagyidaw.<sup>2</sup> Before his accession to the throne Bagyidaw had expressed friendly feelings for the English, but a change seems to have come over him after his grandfather's death. Probably he considered it necessary to pursue the aggressive policy which he had inherited. There are also reasons to assume that his policy was influenced to a great extent by the audacity of his Court and the optimism of his subjects. Judson, an American missionary who had lived for years in Burma, described the King in 1826 in the following words: "He is a man about forty years of age, of rather a dark complexion, and in person small and slender. His manners are graceful,

<sup>1</sup> Ritchie and Evans, *Lord Amherst* (Rulers of India Series), pp. 21, 22.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 147.

and, in public, dignified. In private, he is affable and playful to boyishness. His disposition is obliging and liberal, and he is anxious to see every one around him happy. His mind is indolent, and he is incapable of any continued application. His time is passed in sensual enjoyment, in listening to music, or seeing dancing, or theatrical entertainments; but above all, in the company of the principal Queen to whom he is devoted to infatuation. His personal activity is remarkable for an Eastern Prince, and scarcely a day passes, that he does not go on the river in boats or rides on horseback, or an elephant. He is partial to Europeans. No person of this description comes before him, without receiving some marks of kindness." The principal Queen is characterised by the missionary as haughty, avaricious, vindictive, intriguing and bigoted. The two most influential personalities in the Court were the Queen's brother and the Prince of Tharrawady, the King's younger brother. The former, says Judson, was cruel, rapacious and a great intriguer. Through his sister, we are told, he ruled the Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

Henry Gouger, an Englishman who went to Burma in 1822, attributed the outbreak of war 'primarily to a desire, on the part of the Burman

1 Wilson, *Documents*.

Court, to try its strength with the British.' According to him, the advice offered by Maha Bandula after his triumphant return from Assam hastened the war.<sup>1</sup> This statement is supported by the testimony of John Laird, a Scot who went to Burma in 1820. Maha Bandula, we are told, informed the King that he could conquer Bengal with an army composed of *Kulas* (i.e., foreigners) and that not a single Burmese soldier would be required.<sup>2</sup> Judson says that Maha Bandula "boasted he maintained a secret correspondence with several native Princes of Hindustan who, according to him, would rise against the British, as soon as the Burmese would set them a good example."<sup>3</sup> Laird also gives us a glimpse into the mind of the King's brother. The Prince of Tharrawady is reported to have told him, "You are strong by sea and not by land. We are skilled in making trenches and *abbatis*, which the English do not understand."<sup>4</sup> Less responsible persons held still more unfavourable views about British soldiers. They were considered to be "luxurious and effeminate, incapable of standing

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 174A.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 174B. According to *Konbaungset Yazawin* (Vol. II, p. 371), Maha Bandula compared the Burmese with lions and the English with jackals.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 174C.

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 174B.

the fatigues of war, and therefore unable to contend with a people hardy like themselves, who could carry on war with little food and no shelter."<sup>1</sup> The King was led to believe that his troops would easily march to England.<sup>2</sup> The chains in which the Governor-General was to be brought to the King were coated with gold.<sup>3</sup> Crawford, who went to Burma after the treaty of Yandabo, says; "From the King to a beggar (the Burmese) were hot for a war."<sup>4</sup> In 1823 the Magistrate of Chittagong reported that the Burmese expected an easy victory over the British.<sup>5</sup> We may easily endorse Mr. Harvey's conclusion: "It was not the King who led the people but the people who led the King into war."<sup>6</sup>

The incidents which took place after Bagyidaw's accession (1819) and culminated in war must be interpreted against this background. The Burmese renewed their aggressive activities on the Chittagong frontier without any provocation or excuse. The chief objects of Burmese violence in that quarter were the

1 Judson's evidence. Wilson, *Documents*, No. 174C.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, p. 19.

3 Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War*, p. 277. Trant, *Two Years in Ava*, p. 75.

4 *Journal of an Embassy*, Vol. II, Appendix, p. 71.

5 P. C., June 27, 1823, No. 62.

6 *History of Burma*, p. 304.

elephant hunters in the Company's employ, whom the Burmese seized, and sometimes carried off, under the pretext that they were within Burmese territories. In April, 1821, 25 elephant hunters were carried off and imprisoned at Mangdu under the pretext that they had trespassed upon Burmese boundary. A British officer reported the incident to the Magistrate of Chittagong,<sup>1</sup> and observed that this 'wanton attack' was made 'solely with the view of extorting money from us.' A similar outrage was repeated in April, 1822. Such outrages were likely to put an end to the Company's elephant hunting business at Ramu because hunters were unwilling to enter jungles. A local military officer remarked, "... the Burmah Government of Arracan has manifested an uniform spirit of encroachment upon our territory in this district, since 1794, advancing progressively to the banks of the Mooressee river, which they themselves then declared to be the boundary of Arracan, until they now claim the jungles of Gurgeneea ... at a distance of nearly forty miles from the Mooressee river—the intermediate tract of jungle is of little moment to either state, further than that, as being our best hunting ground for elephants, and where our villagers cut their annual supply of rattans, renders it of some value to

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 14.



us, while to the Burmahs it is of no apparent benefit whatever: their laying claim to it therefore appears to proceed from a mere spirit of arrogance—unless, indeed, that they look forward to the event of future hostilities with our government, when the possession of these jungles would enable them to come, unperceived, into the rear of such troops as might be stationed at Ramoo.”<sup>1</sup> In January, 1823, some British subjects, passing through the Koor Nullah in a boat laden with rice, were asked by the Burmese to pay custom dues, and on their refusal, fired upon. One of the British subjects died.<sup>2</sup> It appears that, as they were passing through British territory, the demand of the Burmese, not to speak of the violence, was altogether illegal. “This outrage was followed by reports of the assemblage of armed men on the Burmese side of the river, with the purpose of destroying the villages on the British territory, and in order to provide against such contingency, as well as to prevent the repetition of any aggression upon the boats trafficking on the Company’s side of the river, the military guard at Tek Naf was strengthened from twenty to fifty men, of whom a few were posted on the adjoining island of Shahpuri.”<sup>3</sup>

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 15.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 16.

3 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 10.

The Governor of Arakan requested the Magistrate of Chittagong to remove British troops from that island. The latter having refused to do so, the Governor wrote a letter to the Governor-General,<sup>1</sup> stating that the island in dispute lay within Burmese territory, and demanding that the troops stationed there should be removed. The Governor-General replied<sup>2</sup> that the Burmese Government had 'not a shadow of right' to the possession of the island and signified his desire "to depute an officer of rank, ... in the ensuing cold season, to adjust finally all questions relating to boundary disputes on the S. E. frontier of that district (i.e., Chittagong), in concert with a properly qualified and duly empowered agent from Arracan." Before this reply could reach the Governor, he took measures for the forcible occupation of the island. On the night of September 24, 1823, one thousand Burmese troops attacked the British post at Shahpuri, killed three Sepoys, wounded four, and drove the rest off the island.<sup>3</sup>

The Burmese claim to the possession of the island of Shahpuri seems to have been altogether unjustifiable. In the absence of Burmese evidence we are forced to base our conclusion on English docu-

1 Dated August 8, 1823. Wilson, *Documents*, No. 17.

2 Dated August 15, 1823. Wilson, *Documents*, No. 18.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 19.

ments, but these are so detailed and circumstantial that it is probably not unsafe to rely upon them. The island was surveyed by British officers in 1801 and leased to one Krishna Das Kanungo in 1803. In 1815 it was found by a British officer in the possession of two refugee *Mags*, who asserted their right on the basis of a *sanad* granted to their father in 1790 by the then Collector of Chittagong. Documents dated in 1819 also proved the occupation of the island by British subjects. Its situation also favoured the British claim. It lies on the British side of the main channel of the Naf, which was the admitted boundary between Chittagong and Arakan. It is really 'a continuation of the Tek, or point of the mainland of the district of Chittagong, from which it is separated only by a narrow and shallow channel.'<sup>1</sup>

It was obviously necessary to take adequate steps for the prevention of sudden Burmese 'irruptions' into British territory. The number of troops usually stationed at Chittagong was very small; they could not be expected to deal with Burmese forces entering into the district by different passes through the hills. Nor could reliance be placed upon troops sent from Calcutta upon the receipt of definite information about Burmese preparations. Such a process would involve

1 Letter to Court of Directors, December 23, 1825, paras 5-10. Wilson, *Documents*, No. 149.

a few days' time and allow the Burmese to take the initiative.<sup>1</sup> A detachment of European and Indian troops was, therefore, ordered to be sent to Chittagong in October, 1823. Lieutenant-Colonel Mc'Creagh, who commanded this detachment, was instructed 'to recover the possession of the island of Shahpuri and punish the aggressors by attacking and destroying their boats and military posts and equipments on the river Naf and eventually pursuing them along the sea coast as far as the Arakan river and even to the fort of Arakan itself.' Lord Amherst was, indeed, determined 'to teach the Burmese a salutary lesson for the future.'<sup>2</sup>

Before these orders could reach Chittagong, Lord Amherst received reports which led him to doubt whether the Burmese ever 'entertained any serious intentions' of a 'general attack' or 'meditated any aggression beyond the seizure of the island of Shahpuri which they claimed as part of the Burmese territory.' So the orders for the despatch of European troops were cancelled; only a detachment of Sepoys was sent to Chittagong under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Thapland, who was instructed only to expel the Burmese from Shahpuri and to maintain a military

1 P. C., June 27, 1823, No. 62.

2 S. C., October 17, 1823, No. 3.

post there. The Magistrate of Chittagong was censured for sending alarming reports based on 'defective information' supplied by the *Daroga* of Tek Naf who was afterwards dismissed for incapacity.<sup>1</sup> A letter was despatched to the ministers at Amarapura, stating that the Governor-General considered the occupation of Shahpuri as an unauthorised act of the Governor of Arakan, and requesting that 'adequate and exemplary punishment' may be inflicted on 'the authors of the disturbance.'<sup>2</sup> Wilson observes, "The tone of this despatch was that of firmness, though of moderation, but when rendered into the Burman language, it may, probably, have failed to convey the resolved and conciliatory spirit, by which it was dictated, as subsequent information of the most authentic character established the fact of its having been misunderstood, as a pusillanimous attempt to deprecate the resentment of the Burmese, and it was triumphantly appealed to at the Court of Ava, as a proof, that the British Government of India was reluctant to enter upon the contest. .".<sup>3</sup>

On October 29, 1823, a few days after the adoption of these conciliatory measures, the Governor-General received a very insolent letter from the Gov-

1 S. C., October 17, 1823, No. 11.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 21.

3 *Historical Sketch*, p. 11.

ernor of Arakan.<sup>1</sup> Precautionary measures were at once adopted for the protection of the Assam and Chittagong frontiers. Troops were sent to Rangpur and Sylhet, and the officers in those districts were directed to collect reliable information about the movements and intentions of the Burmese. David Scott, Agent of the Governor-General on the North-East Frontier, was asked to report his views about the possibility of 'restoring the native Government in Assam.' The Magistrate of Sylhet was required to enquire about 'the number and nature of the passes leading from the Burmese possessions into Cachar and Jaintia and the expediency, with reference to the climate and other considerations, of sending detachments of British troops to occupy the same.'<sup>2</sup> The Commander-in-Chief was requested to suggest measures for the defence of British territories as well as for offensive operations. He suggested that, for the defence of the eastern frontier, three brigades should be formed, to consist of 3,000 men each, to be

1 "If you want tranquillity, be quiet, but if you re-build a stockade at Shein-ma-bu (i.e., Shahpuri) I will cause to be taken, by the force of arms, the cities of Dacca and Moorshedabad, which originally belonged to the great Arracan Rajah, whose chokies and pagodas were there." (Wilson, *Documents*, No. 22).

2 S. C., October 31, 1823, No. 15, 16.

stationed at Chittagong, Jamalpur,<sup>1</sup> and Goalpara, and a strong corps of reserve, to be posted under a senior commanding officer in Dinajpur, to which all communications should be made, and from whence all orders should be issued. He also recommended the formation of an efficient flotilla on the Brahmaputra, towards Assam, and in the vicinity of Dacca.<sup>2</sup> He favoured defensive operations alone: "Any military attempt beyond this, upon the internal dominions of the King of Ava, he is inclined to deprecate, as, instead of armies, fortresses and cities, he is led to believe that we should find nothing but jungle, pestilence, and famine."<sup>3</sup>

In a letter written on October 31 Scott reported that 'some important warlike expedition' was on foot,<sup>4</sup> although he thought that no 'hostile attempt' would be made by the Burmese troops in Assam unless they received positive orders from Amarapura. He recommended that in case of war British troops should invade Assam; he was confident that they would receive every assistance from the people of that unhappy province, who bitterly hated their Burmese

1 A sub-division in the district of Mymensingh, commanding the Brahmaputra.

2 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 12; *Documents*, No. 23.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 24.

4 S. C., November 14, 1823, No. 13.

conquerors. A great majority of the inhabitants of Assam, he said, 'would now view the establishment of the authority of the British Government with the utmost satisfaction.' If the Government decided to place a member of the Ahom royal family on the throne, it would be necessary to 'avow' the right of interfering in the internal administration of the country. Scott was not prepared to extend British military support to incompetent and oppressive Ahom Princes and leave the people in helpless misery.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the close of November information was received that about 900 Burmese troops were ready to invade Cachar.<sup>2</sup> Scott was directed to inform the Burmese commander that Cachar was under Burmese protection. He was also authorised at his discretion 'to direct the troops in Sylhet to advance into Cachar and to occupy the passes through which the Burmese would attempt to penetrate.' As time went on further reports, showing the advance of a large number of Burmese troops towards Cachar, were available.<sup>3</sup> Lord Amherst thought that they were proceeding to assist Tularam<sup>4</sup> against Marjit Singh and Gambhir

1 S. C., November 14, 1823, No. 14.

2 S. C., November 28, 1823, No. 5.

3 S. C., December 12, 1823, No. 2, 3. Wilson, *Documents*, pp. 22-23.

4 See p. 200.



Singh; he could not 'ascribe to this inconsiderable body an intention of committing aggressions in the Company's territories.' But Scott was instructed to take measures for the prevention of Burmese 'irruption' into Cachar and to conclude an alliance with Govinda Chandra.<sup>1</sup> When it was reported that two Burmese parties were proceeding towards Cachar from the north and the east, Lord Amherst remained true to his conviction that they would retreat as soon as they were informed that Cachar was a protected state under the Company. Scott was authorised to 'expel them by force of arms' if they 'evinced a determination to maintain their ground in Cachar notwithstanding this warning.'<sup>2</sup> The warning proved abortive; on January 17, 1824, a clash took place between British and Burmese forces in the village of Vikrampur (45 miles east of Sylhet), in which the Burmese were defeated.<sup>3</sup> Lord Amherst approved the conduct of Major Newton, who commanded the British troops on that occasion, and authorised Scott to take 'active measures for expelling the Burmese from Cachar

1 S. C., December 12, 1823, No. 11.

2 S. C., January 17, 1824, No. 6.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, p. 23. For details, see Gait, *History of Assam*. pp. 274-275.

whilst the season is yet favourable for military operations.<sup>1</sup>

It is necessary at this stage to turn our attention to the Chittagong frontier once again. Shahpuri was re-occupied by British troops on November 21, 1823.<sup>2</sup> The officer in charge of these troops reported that the Burmese would not 'dare to shew themselves offensively against us whilst we remain here with our present force.' A proclamation was issued and circulated, representing the desire of the British Government 'to remain on amicable terms with Burma and to continue the usual friendly intercourse between the two States. In January, 1824, British troops were removed from Shahpuri because the climate had proved peculiarly unhealthy. Only three days after the abandonment of the post four Burmese chiefs assembled their forces at Lowadhung with the declared intention of occupying the island. The Government did not consider it necessary to order the immediate return of the withdrawn troops to the island. It was left to the discretion of the Magistrate and the Commanding Officer, in case of urgent necessity, either to despatch those troops to the island, or to hold such a force in

1 S. C., January 30, 1824, No. 14.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 26.

readiness at Tek Naf as would suffice to expel the Burmese from the disputed territory.<sup>1</sup>

In the meanwhile Robertson, Magistrate of Chittagong, had invited the Governor of Arakan to send proper persons for the purpose of defining and settling the boundary. Four Burmese agents came and suggested that the island should be considered neutral ground and remain unoccupied by either party. The tone of the agents was menacing. When the matter was reported to Calcutta, the Magistrate was informed that 'no overtures involving the relinquishment of our absolute and unqualified right to Shahpuri must for a moment be entertained'. Lord Amherst might have agreed to recognise the island as neutral ground if such a proposal had been 'brought forward by the Government of Ava itself, at an earlier stage of the discussion, and previous to the assault on our outpost and the slaughter of our Sipahis;' but the time for compromise was over. Robertson was also asked to give up the project of defining the boundary, as it could no longer be carried on with any hope of success or even with safety to himself.<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime four ministers of rank had arrived in Arakan from Amarapura to enquire into

1 Wilson, *Documents*.

2 Secret Letter to Court of Directors, February 23, 1824, paras 2-6.

the real state of the dispute with the English and, as it afterwards appeared, to supersede the functions of the local authorities. The arrival of these confidential officers of the Court was followed by a fresh act of outrage. They arrived at Shahpuri 'with four large boats full of armed men, with some pomp and display,' and set fire to a hut, 'the only tangible object on the island.' Their interpreter invited some British military and naval officers to wait on them at Mangdu. The military officers wisely refused this 'insidious invitation,' but some of the naval officers unhappily fell into the snare. On January 21, Commander Chew, who was in charge of the Company's vessel *Sophia*, accompanied by Royce, the Commander of the row boats, and eight *lascars*, went to Mangdu. Chew was 'fully sensible of the hazard attending the step,' before proceeding to the Burmese shore he left particular instructions that, in the event of his not returning by a certain hour, a gun boat should be sent to demand their release. He and his companions were confined as soon as they reached Mangdu, and taken to Lowadhung in the interior. Robertson demanded their release in 'persuasive and conciliatory language'. The Governor of Arakan replied that they had been seized by the orders of the ministers, 'because their ship had been anchored off the island of Shahpuri.' The prisoners were, however, 'treated with humanity,

and even kindness.' The capture of the British officers 'created the greatest terror and alarm in the southern part of the Chittagong district, and the inhabitants were preparing to fly with their cattle and property.' Robertson reported that the designs of the Burmese ministers were hostile, for they were assembling their forces at Mangdu, Lowadhung and other places in the interior.<sup>1</sup>

Lord Amherst naturally took a very serious view of the situation. He came to the conclusion that even the release of the prisoners was not enough, and that the Burmese authorities must be required to offer 'ample apology and reparation' and to 'abandon all pretensions' to the island of Shahpuri. They should also be asked to withdraw their troops from Mangdu and Lowadhung. Robertson knew that these conditions were not likely to be fulfilled by the fire-eating ministers who had come to Arakan with the special mandate of the Burmese King. He reported that the dispute was 'no longer a mere provincial discussion': it had been taken away from the jurisdiction of the Governor of Arakan by the arrival of the ministers. He pointed out that, 'considering the state of affairs at Cachar, and the conduct of the Burmese on the Naf,

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 28.

the British Government must be regarded as virtually at war with the empire of Ava.<sup>1</sup>

After the successful clash with the Burmese at Vikrampur (January 17, 1824) all British troops were withdrawn from Cachar and concentrated at Badarpur.<sup>2</sup> The Burmese then advanced to Jatrapur (about five miles east of the frontier and eight miles from Badarpur), where the two armies from Assam and Manipur formed a junction. A bridge was thrown over the Surma river, and stockades<sup>3</sup> were built on both sides. The total number of Burmese troops in and near Cachar was about 8,000. The Burmese commander informed Scott that his purpose was to restore Govinda Chandra and to secure the

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 28.

2 Now an important junction of the Bengal and Assam Railway.

3 As there are numerous references to Burmese stockades in the following chapter, the following description may be found interesting: "The unvarying element was a continuous wall, sometimes as high as twenty feet of solid timber—the stem of bamboos or trunks of saplings from the neighbouring forests. At the top ran horizontal beams which held all firmly together. At intervals were loop-holes for musketry fire. Within the enclosure, which was square or oblong, were raised platforms of earth or wood from which small guns could discharge over the paling. Inside and outside the stockade were trenches, and on the external face were often abattis formed of trunks of trees." (Ritchie and Evans, *Lord Amberst*, p. 93).

person of the three Manipur brothers.<sup>1</sup> Scott replied that Govinda Chandra would be restored by the British Government, and that the Burmese would not be allowed to seize the Manipur brothers in British territory. The British Government was prepared, however, to 'engage that they should never be permitted to disturb the peace of Cachar.'<sup>2</sup>

Although Major Newton's force was very weak in artillery, circumstances compelled the British troops to attack the Burmese on several occasions. On February 13 an engagement was fought at Badarpur on the north bank of the Surma, and the Burmese were compelled to retreat.<sup>3</sup> Within a few days Jatrapur (where the Burmese had already abandoned their stockades) was occupied. A large number of stockades was destroyed.<sup>4</sup> These successes were followed by a reverse. On February 21 a British detachment attacked a Burmese stockade near Dudpatli. The attack failed, and a retreat was made to Jatrapur.<sup>5</sup> The Burmese took no advantage of this success; they retreated towards Manipur.<sup>6</sup> Thus Cachar was freed from the

1 Chaurjit, Marjit and Gambhir Singh.

2 S. C., February 13, 1824, No. 6.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, pp. 21\*-22\*.

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 25\*.

5 S. C., March 5, 1824, No. 18.

6 S. C., March 12, 1824, No. 19.

invading Burmese army. "As there seemed little reason to apprehend their speedy return in force, and the nature of the country rendered it difficult to procure supplies for any number of troops for a protracted period, it was thought sufficient to leave a small detachment in Cachar, whilst the main body went into cantonments at Sylhet."<sup>1</sup>

War was formally declared on March 5, 1824. In the Proclamation<sup>2</sup> the Governor-General in Council observed, "The Governor-General in Council..., for the safety of our subjects and the security of our districts, already seriously alarmed and injured by the approach of the Burmese armies, has felt himself imperatively called on to anticipate the threatened invasion. The national honour no less obviously requires that atonement should be had for wrongs so wantonly inflicted and so insolently maintained, and the national interests equally demand that we should seek, by an appeal to arms, that security against future insult and aggression which the arrogance and grasping spirit of the Burmese Government have denied to friendly expostulation and remonstrance." On March 17 Lord Amherst received from the Viceroy of Pegu a reply<sup>3</sup> to his letter dated October 17, 1823. The

1 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 16.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 30.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 31.



reply showed that the proceedings of the Governor of Arakan were approved by the Government of Burma, and the Governor-General was asked to refer his views to Maha Bandula who had been 'appointed to regulate all state affairs' in Arakan.<sup>1</sup>

Was Lord Amherst justified in declaring war? He was condemned by the British public and severely taken to task by the Court of Directors. "The treasury they considered was exhausted by the struggle within the limits of India proper and it seemed sheer madness to court further outlay in adventures in the barbarous borderlands."<sup>2</sup> In a long letter<sup>3</sup> to the Court of Directors, dated December 23, 1825, the Supreme Government justified its point of view. It was claimed that recourse to arms could not have been avoided without exposing 'our honour, our

1 According to *Konbaungset Yazawin* (Vol. II, pp. 368-372), the English Chief of Chittagong was prepared to give up the island of Shahpuri, but the King refused to conclude peace. He was very sensitive about the question of the fugitives. Maha Bandula held out the prospect of an easy victory. It was argued that it was necessary to declare war in order to compel the English to show proper respect to the Burmese King. One of the ministers said that frequent rebellions in Assam were due to the shelter given to Assam refugees by the English.

2 Ritchie and Evans, *Lord Amherst*, p. 127.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 149.

interests, and the lives and properties of our subjects ... perhaps to irreparable injury.' The occupation of Assam placed the Burmese 'in a situation the most favourable for making a sudden descent' into northern and eastern Bengal. On the Chittagong frontier they were 'acting systematically upon a plan of slow and gradual encroachment.'<sup>1</sup> Under such circumstances 'a temporizing policy' would have resulted in 'serious loss of reputation in the eyes of all India'; the insolence and audacity of the Burmese would have increased, and hostilities might have broken out at a time when 'we might have been engaged in other quarters, and the plans and measures of our opponent would have been more matured.'

"The period selected for the declaration of war," observed the Governor-General in Council, "has been made the theme of frequent censure, as if in reality any option had been left us in this respect."<sup>2</sup> The

1 On another occasion Lord Amherst wrote that these encroachments were not isolated local occurrences; "they were ... intended as steps towards the accomplishment of their favourite scheme of enforcing that visionary title to the eastern districts of Bengal, which was gravely and formally asserted by them even as late as 1817." (S. C., July 2, 1824, No. 1).

2 Sir Thomas Munro, Governor of Madras, wrote to Lord Amherst on February 25, 1824, "The occasional hostilities on the eastern frontier of Bengal might, perhaps, still be allowed to

concentration of Burmese troops in Arakan and the Burmese invasion of Cachar preceded the declaration of war. The Burmese were 'fully bent on invading the British territory.' If no resistance was offered to them, they would have occupied the forest land near Ramu, which the Company's elephant-hunters had frequented for years; the island of Shahpuri would have been lost; Cachar and Jaintia would have been over-run by them. These 'immediate and direct sacrifices' Lord Amherst was not prepared to make in order to gain a precarious respite for a few months.

continue for some months without much serious inconvenience...".  
(Gleig, *Life of Sir Thomas Munro*, Vol. II, p. 95).

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FIRST ANGLO-BURMESE WAR (1824-1826)

A few days before the formal declaration of war Lord Amherst wrote an elaborate minute<sup>1</sup> about the coming campaigns. His primary difficulty was that the information available about Burma was 'extremely defective and insufficient.' Offensive operations were obviously to be directed against Assam (including Cachar), Arakan (including the islands of Cheduba and Ramree), and the sea ports of Pegu<sup>2</sup> and the Tenasserim coast. From the reports of Scott<sup>3</sup> the Governor-General came to know that the climate of Assam was 'by no means peculiarly unhealthy even during the rains.' So he recommended that Gauhati should be captured and an adequate force stationed there. This was not likely to be a difficult enterprise, for the number of Burmese troops in Assam did not exceed 4,000, and the local population was extremely hostile to them. On the Chittagong frontier *Mag* levies were to be raised and employed in defensive operations, so that regular troops might be spared

1 S. C., February 20, 1824, No. 1.

2 Rangoon.

3 S. C., February 13, 1824, No. 15.

'exposure to the noxious climate of that quarter during the most unhealthy season.' Naval expeditions were to be sent against Cheduba, Ramree, Negrais, Rangoon, Tavoy and Mergui.

Captain Canning was at that time the recognised official expert on Burma. He was, therefore, asked to prepare a memorandum on the best method for conducting the war. He thought that it was 'perfectly practicable' to proceed to Amarapura after occupying Rangoon; 10,000 troops, with a proportionate detail of artillery and gun boats, could easily capture the capital. "For the advance of a force on the capital," Captain Canning wrote, "the commencement of the rains or beginning of June should be selected, when the rise in the river<sup>1</sup> would remove all obstacles from sandbanks etc. and a strong southerly wind convey the troops to their destination in a month or five weeks, the distance from Rangoon being about 500 miles." He also suggested that an army might be sent to Amarapura through Manipur. Although the Burmese had no regular army and no artillery worth the name, yet the ex-envoy warned Government not to treat them 'as a foe altogether contemptible.'<sup>2</sup>

1 The Irrawaddy.

2 S. C., March 12, 1824, No. 4.

Lord Amherst accepted the plan of sending an expedition to Rangoon, with the prospect of advancing upon the capital during the rainy season of 1824. He preferred the Irrawaddy route; the Manipur route, he thought, was likely to be very difficult.<sup>1</sup>

The plan of campaign being settled, troops were despatched to the three theatres of war—Assam, Arakan and Rangoon. In the following pages an attempt has been made to give a brief account of the military and naval operations<sup>2</sup> which culminated in a complete British victory in 1826.

1 S. C., March 12, 1824, No. 29.

2 Wilson's *Documents* contains almost all important documents concerning these operations. I have compared his extracts with the unpublished documents in the Imperial Record Department, and I have found no important omission. For the convenience of my readers, most of whom will have no access to the unpublished records, I have referred to Wilson's book in the footnotes. All important documents on military operations are also printed in De Rhe-Phillipe's *A Narrative of the Burmese War*. Wilson's *Historical Sketch* gives a tolerably complete account of the military operations, although it is of no practical value so far as the *political* aspect of the war is concerned. I have collected supplementary information from the works of reliable contemporaries—Snodgrass, Havelock, Trant, Doveton, Robertson—all of whom took part in the war. Unfortunately they do not deal with operations in Assam and Arakan, with the exception of Robertson, who gives interesting information about Arakan. The part played in this war by the first Madras European Regiment has been described in *Historical Record of First Madras European*

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN ASSAM<sup>1</sup>

On the eve of the outbreak of war David Scott was directed by the Government to induce Gambhir Singh and Marjit Singh to remain at Sylhet; it was proposed that some provision should be made for them out of the revenues of Cachar. Gambhir Singh was 'a bold and aspiring soldier;' the course of events might 'render him an useful ally in the Manipur country,' which he might liberate, with British assistance, from the Burmese yoke.<sup>2</sup> Scott thereupon induced Gambhir Singh to lead an expedition for the conquest of Manipur. Chaurjit Singh was at first associated with this enterprise, but the mutual jealousy between these brothers was so strong that the Commissioner of Sylhet refused Chaurjit's co-operation. Gambhir Singh proceeded to Badarpur in April, 1824, and joined the British detachment stationed there.<sup>3</sup> He was informed that Manipur would be given to him if he could conquer it, and that the British Government would not ask him to

Regiment, by a Staff Officer, 1843. I have also used *Konbaungset Yazawin*.

<sup>1</sup> *Konbaungset Yazawin* does not give details about the operations in Assam; only the name of the general sent to Assam (Maha Kyawhtin) is mentioned (Vol. II, p. 372).

<sup>2</sup> S. C., February 20, 1824, No. 15.

<sup>3</sup> S. C., April 20, 1824, No. 6.

'admit Chaurjit Singh to any share in the Government.'<sup>1</sup> Chaurjit Singh tried 'to excite a spirit of discontent amongst the Manipurian recruits' of a British battalion. He was, therefore, removed to Nadia.<sup>2</sup> He was granted a pension of Rs. 100 per month.<sup>3</sup>

In the meanwhile operations against the Burmese in Assam had begun. The British force in Assam was placed under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel McMorine, who was succeeded, on his death due to cholera in May, 1824, by Lieutenant-Colonel Richards. Towards the close of February, 1824, the troops stationed at Goalpara were ordered to advance into the interior of Assam.<sup>4</sup> "The route lay along both banks of the river Brahmaputra, occasionally through thick jungle and long grass, in which the troops were completely buried: a number of small rivulets and ravines also intersected the road, and marshy swamps rendered the march one of more than usual toil. Through the greater part of the advance, the signs of cultivation were of rare occurrence, and

1 S. C., April 20, 1824, No. 9.

2 S. C., May 14, 1824, No. 14, 17. Nadia is a district in Bengal.

3 P. C., March 18, 1825, No. 47; December 23, 1825, No. 32.

4 S. C., February 20, 1824, No. 15.



all the supplies of the divisions were carried with them on elephants, or in boats.”<sup>1</sup> On March 28 the force arrived at Gauhati and Captain Sneyd captured the place, the Burmese having already evacuated it. Before their flight they had killed 14 Assamese Chiefs whom they suspected of an intention to come over to the British side. The local population was hostile to the Burmese. Several of the Assamese tribes had assembled to cut them up, and to prevent their passage to Amarapura. The Raja of Dring and some other petty Chiefs accepted British protection.<sup>2</sup> A proclamation<sup>3</sup> was issued by the British officers, asking the Assamese to co-operate with them, and assuring them that they would re-establish in Assam ‘a government adapted to their wants, and calculated to promote the happiness of all classes.’ The response was satisfactory, “but their unwarlike character, scanty numbers, and reduced means, rendered their co-operation of no value.”<sup>4</sup>

Scott came to Gauhati with three companies of Indian Infantry on April 3, and reached Nowgaon on April 15.<sup>5</sup> It was then one of the largest towns in

1 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 18.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, p. 34.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, p. 35.

4 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 18.

5 Wilson, *Documents*, pp. 34-35.

Assam, extending, in a straggling manner, for about twelve miles along both sides of the Kullung river, and containing, it is said, four thousand families. It was a healthy place, suitable for a cantonment. The Burmese, about 1,000 strong, had established a stockade at Mara Mukh; they were 'worse armed than usual.' Scott proposed an attack on Koliabar, one day's march north-east of Nowgaon. The forward movement on Koliabar was calculated to establish British authority in the western part of Assam, to secure provisions for the future supplies for the troops, and to dispel the well-grounded fears of the inhabitants that, if the country was left unoccupied, the Burmese would recover their courage, and at least deprive the English troops of its resources, if not create a subsequent famine by sending out small parties to devastate and burn the villages. Upon the good will of the local people British officers naturally placed great emphasis. Scott found them well-disposed towards the British troops: "Such of them as had displayed any backwardness in assisting us were either dependents of the Burmese, or afraid of their return, which latter feeling could only be completely dispelled by the advance of a large force." Colonel Richards advanced to Koliabar, which remained for a few months the seat of the main body of the British detachment.

In May the Burmese, who had taken up a stockaded position at Hatbār, on the south bank of the Kullung river, evacuated it on the advance of Lieutenant-Colonel Richards, and retired to Rangligarh, where they had a strong stockade, about eight hours' march from Koliabar. A small party returned to reoccupy it, but Lieutenant Richardson successfully surprised it. Twenty Burmese soldiers and a *Phukan* (commander) were killed. The *Phukan* was reported to have been second in command and chief manager of the Burmese camp.<sup>1</sup> The Burmese tried, a few days later,<sup>2</sup> to attack Captain Horsburgh's position at Hatbar. On this occasion, says Wilson,<sup>3</sup> the Burmese 'exhibited the only proof of enterprise, which they had yet displayed in the campaign in Assam.' Captain Horsburgh succeeded in repulsing the attack. A large number of Burmese soldiers was killed on the spot or drowned in the Kullung. Some old muskets, brass drums, and about eighteen jinjals were captured. The Burmese retired to a place called Oapah Ruttra, two long marches from Rangligarh.<sup>4</sup>

1 Wilson, *Documents*, pp. 35-36.

2 Lieutenant Richardson's successful attack took place on May 17, and Captain Horsburgh's defence on May 24. (Wilson, *Documents*, p. 36).

3 *Historical Sketch*, p. 19.

4 Wilson, *Documents*, p. 36.

On June 4 Captain Wallace destroyed a Burmese stockade on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, near Gauhati.<sup>1</sup> Towards the close of June the following information was received in Calcutta about the strength and disposition of the Burmese troops in Assam: at Mara Mukh, 1,000; at Jorhat, 100; at Rangpur, 1,000. Mara Mukh was strongly fortified, and considered as their 'grand point of resistance to the attack of any force.'<sup>2</sup>

The commencement of the rainy season compelled the British troops to leave Koliabar and to retire to Gauhati, and military operations were necessarily suspended. The general result of the first campaign in Assam was, says Wilson, "decidedly favourable, and the British authority was established over a considerable tract of country between Goalpara and Gauhati. It is likely, however, that had an advance like that made by Colonel Richards in April, been authorised a few weeks sooner, the Burmese might have been expelled from a still greater portion of Assam; their force in this country never having been formidable, either in numbers or equipment."<sup>3</sup>

Before the setting in of the rainy season the Burmese, emboldened by the withdrawal of British

1 Wilson, *Documents*, p. 36.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, pp. 36-37.

3 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 19.

troops from Cachar, renewed their invasion of that province.<sup>1</sup> They advanced from Manipur, and occupied the heights of Talain, Dudpatli and Jatrapur. The force that occupied these positions was estimated at about 8,000 men and it was given out that they formed but a part of an army of 15,000. In consequence of the apprehensions excited for the safety of Chittagong and Dacca, after the defeat of Ramu,<sup>2</sup> the force at Sylhet had moved towards the south.<sup>3</sup> The alarm having subsided, Lieutenant-Colonel Innes returned to Sylhet on June 12 with about 1,200 men and proceeded to Cachar to expel the invaders. His march was rendered extremely difficult by incessant rains and consequent inundation of the country.<sup>4</sup>

On the way he tried to dislodge the Burmese from the heights of Talain, where they were strongly stockaded. For three days (July 6, 7, 8) British guns fired on the stockade; Gambhir Singh, with his 'excellent local knowledge,' assisted the operations. On the second day the position was so desperate that Colonel Innes gave up the hope of carrying the stockade without further re-inforcements. On the third day the attack was given up, and Colonel Innes

1 S. C., June 11, 1824, No. 9.

2 See p. 260.

3 S. C., June 4, 1824, No. 27.

4 S. C., June 18, 1824, No. 28.

retreated to Jatrapur, where he took up a strong position.<sup>1</sup> "The Burmese remained in their entrenchments, being, in fact, confined to them by the rise of the rivers, and no further movements took place on either side, during the continuance of the rains."<sup>2</sup>

The return of the British troops to Gauhati at the beginning of the rainy season was followed by an aggressive movement on the part of the Burmese, who occupied Koliabar, Raha *Chokey* and Nowgaon. They levied heavy contributions on the people, pillaged the country, and devastated the frontier districts of the British ally and dependant, the Raja of Jaintia. Colonel Richards was accordingly asked to expel the Burmese from those stations. He had at his disposal about 3,000 men, "a corps more than adequate for the purpose it was directed to effect, being fully equal, if not superior, to the aggregate of the Burman troops in Assam, and infinitely superior in equipment and efficiency."<sup>3</sup>

At the end of October Colonel Richards asked Major Waters to proceed to Raha *Chokey* and Nowgaon, and sent Major Cooper to reoccupy Koliabar.<sup>4</sup>

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 44, 45, 46.

2 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 23.

3 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 44.

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 87(A).

Major Cooper arrived at Koliabar on October 31,<sup>1</sup> and found that the post was unoccupied by the Burmese. On his way he had surprised a small party of the Burmese and killed their leader.<sup>2</sup> Major Waters dislodged a Burmese party from Hatgaon<sup>3</sup> and occupied Raha *Chokey* by a surprise attack on November 2.<sup>4</sup> Hearing that the Burmese Governor of Assam had left Nowgaon with his troops and intended to retreat across the hills into Manipur, Major Waters pursued him and occupied the deserted stockade at Nowgaon; but the Governor had gone too far to render a pursuit practicable unless by the Cavalry. The Governor was totally unprepared for the rapid advance of his enemy, and left behind him all his baggage, plunder, military stores, and heavy property. Major Waters captured twenty iron guns and some boats.<sup>5</sup>

Colonel Richards moved the remaining portion of his force up to Koliabar. From Koliabar the force arrived at Mara Mukh on January 6, 1825.<sup>6</sup> Hearing

1 Wilson (*Historical Sketch*, p. 44) is wrong in saying that he arrived on October 29.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 87(B).

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 87(C).

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 87(D).

5 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 87(E).

6 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 45.

that two Burmese parties had taken shelter in the neighbouring hills and apprehending that they might cut off supplies and command the road between Kolia-bar and Mara Mukh, Colonel Richards detached different parties against them. They were able to destroy the stockade at various places and to cut up some small Burmese parties.<sup>1</sup>

These successes compelled the Burmese to concentrate their forces at Jorhat, and left the country open for the British advance. Here a fierce quarrel broke out in the Burmese camp; the Burmese Governor of Assam was killed by the followers of *Sauma Phukan*, a rival Burmese general. "Despairing, consequently, of defending the position at Jorhat, the Burman Commanders, after setting fire to the entrenchment, fell back upon the capital, Rungpore, on the banks of the Dikho, about twenty miles from its junction with the Brahmaputra."<sup>2</sup>

Colonel Richards advanced to Jorhat on January 17, 1825, and within a week established his headquarters at Gauri Sagar, on the Dikho river, about eight miles from Rangpur.<sup>3</sup> On January 27, the Burmese attacked the British advanced post at a

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 88, 89(A, B, C).

2 S. C., February 11, 1825, No. 18.

3 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 46.



bridge over the Namdong *nullab*, but they were repulsed with heavy loss.<sup>1</sup> Colonel Richards naturally wanted to follow up this success by the capture of Rangpur. Strengthened by the requisite reinforcement of guns he started on January 29 and attacked a Burmese stockade on the route. The engagement was severe. Colonel Richards and another officer were wounded; the loss in wounded was very heavy. The result, however, was satisfactory, for the stockade was captured.<sup>2</sup> On January 30 the Burmese fort at Rangpur was attacked. Soon after the attack had begun a herald came from the fort under a flag of truce. He "represented himself to be a native of Ceylon, by name Dharmadur Burmacheree,<sup>3</sup> many years resident in Bengal and the Eastern Islands, ... at present Raj Gooroo, or chief priest, to the Saum and Burmese authorities in Assam." He said that the Burmese camp was divided into numerous conflicting factions, but the two great chiefs, *Saum* and *Baglee Phukans*, were disposed to come to an understanding with the British Government. Colonel Richards agreed to form an alliance with these two chiefs if they came over to the British side and aban-

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 90.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 91(B).

3 The name seems to show that he was a native of Bengal.

done the others to their fate in a continuance of hostilities. The Guru declared that it was impossible, for the anti-British party considerably preponderated in strength over the two *Phukans* and that "the slightest suspicion of such an inclination would entail bloodshed and destruction, not only on their families here, but in their own country." Colonel Richards then agreed to allow the entire Burmese army "to retire out of Assam into their own country, ... provided that they took the directest route, committed no ravages on the road, and carried away none of the inhabitants now in their possession, by compulsion." This advantage he was willing to grant them because he knew that it was impossible for him to prevent their escape or to rescue the captive Assamese inhabitants. The *Phukans* wrote a letter,<sup>1</sup> saying that they were willing to leave Assam, and hoping that British troops would not molest them on their journey. Some of them came to the English camp to settle the terms of peace. Some agreed to evacuate the fort and leave for their own country; others surrendered, on condition that they would not be delivered to the King of Ava on the restoration of peace. Thus Rangpur was occupied almost without bloodshed.<sup>2</sup>

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 92(F).

2 S. C., March 4, 1825, No. 2.

The place was strong enough to resist for some time at least. It was "of very great extent, and surrounded by deep swamps and jungles, with a ditch; the sorties to the three gates were strongly defended; and on them and the walls were more than two hundred pieces of ordnance ready for services." The occupation of such a place made the British the master of Assam, for it secured "a key to all points from whence any future irruptions may be attempted from the eastward."<sup>1</sup>

After the occupation of Rangpur Colonel Richards heard that the Sing Phos, a hill tribe living in eastern Assam, were plundering and carrying off the inhabitants into slavery. He detached some parties to drive them back to their own territory and to rescue their helpless captives.<sup>2</sup> Early in May the Burmese appeared again and built stockades in several Sing Pho villages along the river Nao Dehing. From these posts they were driven away by the middle of June, and several hundred Assamese captives were rescued.<sup>3</sup>

It is necessary at this stage to turn our attention to the Sylhet frontier. Towards the close of October,

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 92(C).

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 93.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 94(A, B), 95.

1824, the Burmese army in Cachar retired to Manipur; British troops could not pursue them because the country was still under water,<sup>1</sup> but they occupied Talain and Dudpatli, and destroyed the stockades built by the Burmese. Cachar was entirely evacuated by the Burmese in a hurry, but it is difficult to understand why they did so. Dudpatli was strongly fortified, and probably ten thousand Burmese troops were living there on the eve of their departure.<sup>2</sup>

Brigadier-General Shuldham, Commanding Eastern Frontier, decided to march to Manipur, and for that purpose made arrangements for the construction of a road from Dudpatli towards Manipur.<sup>3</sup> On February 24, 1825, he arrived at Banskandi. The geographical features of the country and the incessant rains made it impossible for him to complete the road or to advance towards Manipur. On March 11, he reported that "the state of the road is such that it is quite impossible to send supplies on to the advance, either on camels, bullocks, elephants, or

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 96.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 97. Wilson says that the Burmese sustained a serious reduction of their force by the climate and want of supplies. (*Historical Sketch*, p. 49). There is nothing in the documents to support this hypothesis. *Konbaungset Yazawin* (Vol. II, p. 385) informs us that Assam troops were recalled after the capture of Rangoon by the English.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 98.

mèn.”<sup>1</sup> “The country from Banskandy towards Manipur was a continual series of ascents and descents, the route being intersected, at right angles, by ridges of mountains running nearly due north and south ... for the first thirty miles, also the sides of the mountains were completely covered with a thick forest ... The soil was a soft alluvial mould, converted by the slightest rain into mire.”<sup>2</sup> The attempt to advance to Manipur was, therefore, abandoned, and the main body of the troops was removed to Dacca.<sup>3</sup>

Gambhir Singh, who had so long been living in British camps and training his troops, now decided to take up the task condemned as hopeless by General Shuldham.<sup>4</sup> With the permission of British authorities he started for Manipur with his own troops, 500 in number.<sup>5</sup> A British officer named Lieutenant Pemberton volunteered to accompany him.<sup>6</sup> They arrived at Banskandi on May 23, and, after a march of great difficulty and privation, reached the valley of Manipur on June 10. On their approach the Bur-

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 99-103.

2 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 49.

3 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 50.

4 The Government attributed General Shuldham's failure to 'physical difficulties of an insurmountable nature.' (Wilson, *Documents*, No. 171).

5 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 50.

6 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 104(A).

mese left the capital of Manipur and stockaded themselves at a village called Undro, about ten miles away. Gambhir Singh occupied the capital and proceeded towards Undro, but found it deserted.<sup>1</sup> He left 300 men at Manipur and returned to Sylhet. He believed that the Burmese troops stationed on the confines of Manipur would not be able to dispossess the party he had left there.<sup>2</sup> Lieutenant Pemberton reported that the success of the enterprise was due mainly to "his energy, perseverance and skill."<sup>3</sup>

On December 18, 1825, Gambhir Singh returned to Manipur with his troops. He was accompanied by Captain Grant. At that time the Burmese force at Kubo did not consist of more than 300 or 400 men.<sup>4</sup> A few days later Gambhir Singh came to know that all Burmese troops had been withdrawn from Kubo, leaving it solely under the protection of 500 of its own inhabitants. Hoping that the district would submit to him without fighting, he sent his troops there early in January, 1826.<sup>5</sup> The principal chief of the district, the Sumjoo Raja, collected about 700 men in the Tummoo stockade and deter-

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 104(B).

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 105.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 104(A).

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 164(B).

5 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 165(B).

mined to resist the advance of Gambhir Singh's troops. Thereupon Gambhir Singh and Captain Grant arrived at the scene and cut off their enemy's troops. The sudden flight of the Sumjoo Raja was partly due to the impression that a British battalion had entered Manipur. Such an impression, Captain Grant expected, would cause some alarm at the Burmese capital and create a diversion in favour of Sir Archibald Campbell.<sup>1</sup> Another stockade on the right bank of the Ningtee river was also captured. Captain Grant reported, "... the activity, judgment, and skill, he (i.e., Gambhir Singh) has displayed on this occasion, have proved the justice of the opinion previously entertained of his merits. The steady gallantry which, without the usual aids of cannon, could force a brave enemy to evacuate a strongly fortified position, is a very satisfactory illustration of the character of his followers ... ."<sup>2</sup>

On February 1, 1826, Gambhir Singh arrived on the western bank of the Ningtee and found the entire district deserted. The inhabitants had made a very hurried retreat, having left their cattle behind and allowed their Manipur prisoners to escape. Even

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 166(C).

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 166(B).

the district on the opposite side of the river was deserted.<sup>1</sup>

#### MILITARY AND NAVAL OPERATIONS IN ARAKAN<sup>2</sup>

Owing to geographical and climatic difficulties Lord Amherst was at first inclined to follow a defensive policy on the Chittagong frontier,<sup>3</sup> but the retreat of the Burmese army after the battle of Ramu made it easy for the British troops to penetrate into the interior of Arakan.

Maha Bandula himself, the greatest Burmese General of his day, proud, audacious and self-confident, commanded the Arakan army. Early in May, 1824, about 8,000 Burmese troops crossed the Naf, and advanced to Ratnapullung, about 14 miles south of Ramu, under the command of the Governors of Arakan, Ramree, Sandway and Cheduba. These Governors were assisted by four inferior members of the Royal Council.<sup>4</sup> Maha Bandula himself directed this campaign from his seat in the city of Arakan.<sup>5</sup>

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 167(B).

S. C., February 17, 1826, No. 50, 51; May 5, 1826, No. 22.

2 *Konbaungset Yazawin* gives some details. (Vol. II, pp. 372, 377-380, 385-386).

3 S. C., August 6, 1824, No. 44.

4 Wilson, *Documents*, p. 43.

5 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 20.



Hearing that the Burmese were advancing upon Ratnapullung, Captain Noton, officer in charge of the British garrison at Ramu, went with his troops to meet them and to ascertain their object. A heavy fire was opened upon this party by the Burmese, and Captain Noton was compelled to return to Ramu because his elephants had thrown away the guns and ammunition placed upon them. The ammunition coolies had deserted, the guns were perfectly useless, no confidence could be placed on the *Mags*, there was no possibility of procuring supplies. During the retreat some *Mags* behaved with great coolness in the face of danger, much to Captain Noton's satisfaction.<sup>1</sup> On his return he was re-inforced; the whole force under his command amounted to about 1,000 troops, of whom less than half were regulars.<sup>2</sup>

On May 13 the Burmese advanced from Ramcote and Ratnapullung and occupied the hills east of Ramu. Captain Noton apprehended an attack and prepared for resistance. Next day two Burmese horsemen<sup>3</sup> approached the opposite bank of the river, disavowed any hostile intention, requested Captain Noton to deliver up to them some rebellious Burmese

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 36.

subjects living under British protection, and offered to explain their views in detail if Captain Noton allowed them to cross the river with a guard of 100 horsemen and guaranteed their safety. Captain Noton, placing little confidence in these assertions, rejected their proposal.

The Burmese camp occupied an extent of ground upwards of a mile in length. Captain Noton estimated that the Burmese force consisted of not less than 10,000 fighting men, besides, at least, an equal number of coolies and camp-followers. His own force consisted of about 1,000 men; of these, little reliance could be placed on 250 Provincials and 400 *Mags*. Yet so confidently did he expect reinforcements from Chittagong, that he determined, with the approval of every officer present, to defend, against such superior numbers, the post which he commanded.

On the night of May 14 it was found that the Burmese force had concentrated on the opposite bank of the river, apparently with the intention of crossing at a favourable opportunity. So some British troops were detached to annoy the Burmese in their encampment and to prevent their fording the river. A skirmish followed. The British camp remained on the alert the whole night in expectation of an attack.

On the following morning the Burmese crossed

the river unobserved and took possession of a tank. Captain Noton occupied another tank and took up his position behind an embankment, about three feet high, which completely surrounded his camp. He opened fire, but it was not very effective. The Burmese cautiously concealed themselves in the neighbouring huts and behind trees, and exposed themselves as little as possible. Information from Chittagong led Captain Noton to expect that reinforcement would arrive on the evening of May 16. He accordingly persevered in his former determination to defend his post till that time.

On May 16, Captain Noton found in the morning that the Burmese had considerably advanced their trenches, but were still at some distance from his camp. At noon they set fire to the *Mag* barrack in the rear of the British camp. In the evening Captain Noton heard that the Provincials had betrayed an intention of deserting him and going over to the Burmese side.<sup>1</sup> He at once went to the spot and found the elephants loaded with baggage. He secured the ringleaders, and took measures to prevent their followers from carrying their intention into effect. Under these circumstances Captain Noton seriously thought of beginning a retreat under the

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 41.

cover of darkness. "Reluctant, however, to quit the post, which he had so long and so successfully defended without allowing the enemy to gain in struggle advantage over him, and anxiously, but confidently expecting to be joined in a few hours by Captain Brandon's detachment,<sup>1</sup> he at length, (depending solely on the courage and good discipline of the regular troops in the event of an attack) once more resolved, with the concurrence of the officers, to hold on till the arrival of the wished for reinforcement which it was considered could not be delayed beyond the following morning."

Throughout the night the Burmese were very active in extending their trenches. On the following morning they advanced very near the British camp and invested the tank which sheltered it. "The fire on both sides was now incessant, and at so short a distance proportionately formidable and effectual." The Provincials became so alarmed that they fled with precipitation. The *Mags* followed them. Even the elephants took fright and ran off at full speed. The tank was taken possession of by the Burmese, and the remaining British troops were nearly surrounded by them. Captain Noton had no other alternative but to attempt a retreat instantly. His

<sup>1</sup> From Chittagong.

troops proceeded in tolerable order for about half a mile, keeping up a desultory fire on the Burmese, who poured in on them on every side in immense numbers. "On the arrival of the enemy's cavalry," we read in an official despatch, "who fell upon our rear and cut to pieces numbers of sepoy, the detachment quickened its paces, and the utmost combined exertions of the officers to preserve the ranks, and effect the formation of a square, were unavailing, and each corps and company presently became so intermingled with each other, that all order and discipline became at an end." Captain Noton and Captain Trueman were overtaken by the Burmese and cut to pieces. Captain Pringle and Ensign Bennett were killed in attempting to cross the river (which was not fordable). When the river came in sight every sepoy hastily divested himself of his arms and clothes and plunged into water. Two officers were missing.<sup>1</sup> According to official returns, between six and seven hundred men reached Chittagong by May 23. So the whole loss in killed and captured did not probably exceed 250. Some prisoners were sent to Amarapura.<sup>2</sup>

There is no doubt that the British disaster at Ramu was due solely to Captain Noton's mistakes.

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 35, 36.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 21.

He carelessly allowed the Burmese soldiers to cross the river without any opposition. It was unwise on his part to face 10,000 Burmese soldiers with only 1,000 men at his disposal. It was an act of incredible rashness, for he knew that no reliance could be placed on the loyalty and military skill of 250 Provincials and 400 *Mags*. He might have saved himself and his party if he had retired on May 16 under cover of darkness, but even at that stage he risked everything in anticipation of reinforcements.

The disaster created consternation at Chittagong; even Dacca and Calcutta became uneasy. The Magistrate of Chittagong organised large bodies of *Mags* for offensive operations.<sup>1</sup> Considerable reinforcements were sent to Chittagong.<sup>2</sup>

It is rather strange that Maha Bandula did nothing to complete the success his officers had won at Ramu.<sup>3</sup> Towards the close of May the Burmese

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 38.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, p. 43.

3 "But backward as were the Burmese leaders in taking advantage of the success they had achieved, they were not more so than were the British in trying to recover the *prestige* they had lost. No attempt was made to avenge the defeat at Ramu: the defensive policy previously determined on was strictly adhered to, and soon the advent of the rainy season put an end to all operations."—De Rhe-Phillipe, *A Narrative of the First Burmese War*, p. 55.

advanced to Chuckereeah,<sup>1</sup> which they soon left. Early in June they occupied the British stockade at Tek Naf and tried unsuccessfully to cut off a British cruizer and some gun-boats in the river.<sup>2</sup> Early in July a messenger who had conveyed a letter from the Magistrate of Chittagong to the Governor of Arakan returned to the former station and gave an alarming report about Burmese preparations for war. He said that there were 8,000 Burmese troops near the frontier, and Maha Bandula would soon join them with 9,000 men. The whole force would then advance to Chittagong. Two blacksmiths' forges were constantly at work, repairing arms of every description. Two Arakan *Mags*, who had escaped from Ramu to Chittagong, had a different story to tell. They said that the news of the capture of Rangoon, Bassein and Cheduba<sup>3</sup> had already reached Maha Bandula, and the Governor of Arakan had been asked to send reinforcements to prevent the progress of the British army towards Amarapura. Probably the story of the *Mags* was true, for the Burmese evacuated Ramu in August, 1824.<sup>4</sup>

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 37.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, pp. 43-44.

3 See below.

4 Wilson, *Documents*, pp. 42-45.

On May 5, 1824, Sir Archibald Campbell left Port Cornwallis.<sup>1</sup> Before his departure he despatched two detachments for the capture of Negrais and Cheduba. Towards the middle of May Major Wahab landed at Negrais and found the island uninhabited: it was perfectly barren and covered with an almost impenetrable jungle and deep inlets of salt water. He found no article of subsistence for his troops. He, therefore, crossed over to the mainland with a party of troops and tried to buy provision from the inhabitants. On May 17 he discovered that a stockade had been erected and troops and boats were being collected near the shore on the mainland. A detachment was at once sent. The stockade was occupied. The Burmese fled in the utmost disorder, leaving everything behind them. They suffered severely, for no less than 800 men had collected within so small an enclosure. Ten or twelve guns and many muskets were captured. In spite of this success Major Wahab did not consider it worth while to remain in the island. So he evacuated it and returned to Rangoon.<sup>2</sup>

Cheduba is a small island on the Arakan coast.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 55 (A, B, C, D). S. C., July 16, 1824, No. 13.



A British detachment under Brigadier McCreagh arrived there on May 12, 1824. On May 14 the troops landed and occupied a small outpost without opposition. Then an attack on British boats in the river cost the Burmese 20 killed and many wounded. At last the main stockade in the town was attacked and captured. The Burmese chief in command was killed; his men fled, leaving a large number killed. Having made such arrangements regarding the island as circumstances admitted, Brigadier McCreagh returned to Rangoon on June 11.<sup>1</sup>

During the month of September, 1824, the Company's cruizer *Hastings*, stationed off Cheduba, made several reconnaissances of the neighbouring island of Ramree, and cut off several Burmese war boats.<sup>2</sup> In October some stockades in the island of Ramree were destroyed.<sup>3</sup>

Maha Bandula's departure had sensibly weakened the effective strength of the Burmese force in Arakan, and it was no longer possible for it to undertake offensive operations. After leaving the stockades at Ramu the Burmese retreated to Mangdu and

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 57(B). S. C., July 7, 1824, No. 13; July 16, 1824, No. 6, 12.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 72(A), 72(B).

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 72(D), 73(A), 73(B).

Lowadhung, and finally concentrated themselves in the city of Arakan, which they carefully fortified.<sup>1</sup>

General Morrison, who commanded the British force at Chittagong, could not leave his station during the rainy season of 1824. The rains continued till the end of November and retarded the preparation of a military road from Chittagong to the river Naf, by which the artillery and loaded cattle were to proceed.<sup>2</sup>

The troops began to march in January, 1825, and followed a road along the coast to the mouth of the Naf. A detachment went to Mangdu and occupied it without opposition. The Burmese took with them their artillery and burnt stores of grain. The local population remained quiet and showed no alarm.<sup>3</sup> A proclamation<sup>4</sup> was issued, asking them to obey the orders of the British commander.

1 "The old capital of Arakan was situated in the interior of the country on a branch of the Kuladan river. But, shortly after our taking possession of the country, from the reputed unhealthiness, inaccessibility, and distance from the sea of the old city, a new site was chosen on a large land-locked estuary at the mouth of the Kuladan river, forming a safe harbour." (Fytche, *Burma, Past and Present*, Vol. I, pp. 87-88). This harbour is now known as Akyab.

2 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 51.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 108(A).

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 108(B).

General Morrison left a detachment at Mangdu and proceeded along the bank of the river Mayu. The land column advanced without difficulty, but the water column was delayed by a storm and serious geographical obstacles. When both the columns arrived at the mouth of the Mayu, an advance was made by water to the Chang Krein Island.<sup>1</sup> There a sufficient force was collected by March 20. The right was pushed forward to Natonguay, and a detachment was sent to threaten Burmese stockades at Kheon Peela. The country was rich, and provisions of all kinds were available. The climate was salubrious and the troops were healthy.<sup>2</sup>

In the meanwhile the major part of the fleet under Commodore Hayes was proceeding from Mangdu to the Arakan river. On February 22 he heard that a stockade at Chamballa, which commanded the way to the city of Arakan, was defended by 1,000 Burmese soldiers. He attacked it on the next day. The Burmese fired 'with great regularity and spirit,' and the place was found to be more strongly protected than it had been thought to be. After 'a severe conflict of two hours' duration' the Commodore found that "any further contest was a

1 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, pp. 52-53.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 110.

useless waste of ... lives," and he dropped down the river. His loss was severe.<sup>1</sup>

General Morrison began to advance on March 24 towards the city of Arakan along the eastern bank of the branch of the main stream, or Arakan river. The greatest difficulty he had to encounter was the obstruction of the *nullahs*, which intersected the road every few miles.<sup>2</sup>

On March 26 there was an engagement with Burmese troops posted on the Padha hills. A British detachment ascended the summit of the hills, a stockade was captured, and the Burmese were compelled to run away. They easily escaped, because the nature of the ground prevented the British cavalry from pursuing them.<sup>3</sup> But the Burmese were so much afraid that they abandoned their stockades at Chamballa.

On the next day the British force arrived at Mahattee. Here they found a Burmese post. "The enemy's position was well chosen, being situated on a peninsula, protected by a broad river, ... whose banks ... were covered with sharp stakes. Their defences consisted of deep entrenchments along the margin ... in the rear, high conical hills, surmounted

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 111(A).

2 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 54.

3 Wilson *Documents*, No. 112(B).

by pagodas, and surrounded by entrenchments, served as numerous citadels, and appeared to be occupied." Even such a position was surrendered without a determined struggle.<sup>1</sup>

On March 29 the Burmese defences near the city of Arakan were attacked. These consisted of a connected series of stockades, carried along a range of hills which were 350-450 feet in height. One pass alone led through them to the capital, and that was defended by a fire of several pieces of artillery and about 3,000 muskets. On the hills about 9,000 Burmese troops had assembled. In vain did British troops try to capture the pass and assail the right of the Burmese position. The next day was spent in the construction of a battery which was expected to destroy the Burmese works commanding the pass. On March 31 a heavy cannonade was directed against the Burmese, but their artillery could not be silenced. A night attack, however, succeeded in capturing a hill on the Burmese right. This seems to have created a panic among the Burmese, for they surrendered the remaining hills almost without any resistance on April 1. Thus the city of Arakan was secured at the cost of 2 killed and 97 wounded.<sup>2</sup>

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 112(B).

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 112(B).

Wilson says, "Aracan stands upon a plain generally of rocky ground, surrounded by hills and traversed by a narrow tide *nulla* ... The fort stands at the N. W. corner ... It consists of three concentric walls ... These walls are of considerable thickness and extent, constructed with large stones, and with a degree of labour such as a powerful state alone could have commanded."<sup>1</sup> ...

After the occupation of the city General Morrison tried to prevent the Burmese troops from returning to Burma. In this attempt he was not very successful. Some stragglers were captured; but a large proportion of the survivors merged themselves in the local population, some wandered in the jungles, and others proceeded to Burma by unfrequented mountain routes.<sup>2</sup>

Two of the four provinces of Arakan (Arakan and Cheduba) being cleared of the Burmese, it only remained to dislodge them from the remaining provinces of Sandway and Ramree. This task General Morrison entrusted to General McBean, who left the city of Arakan with a part of the force on April 8.<sup>3</sup>

We have already referred to some British operations against Ramree in September and October,

1 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, pp. 56-57.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 114.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 114.

1824. In February, 1825, Captain Hardy, commanding *Hastings*, led an unsuccessful attack against that island. His failure was due to the treachery of the guides, who took him away from the place which he wanted to attack.<sup>1</sup> This reverse was retrieved some weeks later by General McBean, who occupied Ramree on April 22 without any opposition from the Burmese. It is difficult to understand why they had evacuated it before his arrival, for it was powerfully defended by a strong stockade and several forts upon adjoining hills.<sup>2</sup>

General McBean then proceeded towards Sandway and occupied it on April 30 without opposition. The banks of the river were covered with breastworks at different commanding points, and the town was strengthened by two stockades, but no attempt was made by the Burmese to utilise these defences.<sup>3</sup>

The occupation of the entire province of Arakan fulfilled one of the chief objects of the expedition, but it was not found possible to send a portion of the British force in Arakan across the mountains to assist Sir Archibald Campbell. The chief impediments were geographical and climatic.<sup>4</sup> A reconnaissance

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 115.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 116(B).

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 116(C).

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 171.

was made towards the close of May by Major Bucke under the instructions of General Morrison.<sup>1</sup> The information collected by him revealed the exact nature of the country between Arakan and Burma, and brought to light the difficulties which had to be confronted if Upper Burma was to be invaded from Arakan across the Arakan Yoma mountains. Wilson says, "Above eighty miles of a low jungly tract, crossed by numerous rivulets, intervened between the capital and Talak, at the foot of the mountainous ridge which separates Arakan from Ava. It thence passed, for ninety miles more, over lofty and rugged precipices, where no supplies could be expected, and even water was scarce ... A much more practicable road across the mountains by Aeng,<sup>2</sup> was not discovered until the end of the war ..."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 118(B). Robertson (*Political Incidents of the First Burmese War*, p. 128) says that the journey of Major Bucke was useless (for British troops could not advance through the Talak pass) and describes General Morrison as a man disposed to reject information reaching him through those in whose favour he was not professionally prepossessed. Robertson himself favoured the Aeng Pass. The Commander-in-Chief accepted General Morrison's recommendation in favour of Talak. (S. C., August 26, 1824, No. 78). The whole plan was, however, abandoned later on.

<sup>2</sup> For a full description of the Aeng and Talak passes, see Robertson, *Political Incidents of the First Burmese War*, pp. 55-57, 125, 245-248.

<sup>3</sup> *Historical Sketch*, p. 59.



During the rainy season of 1825 the climate of Arakan proved very unhealthy. Fever and dysentery broke out among the troops to an alarming extent, and with the most disastrous results.<sup>1</sup> The Government was at last compelled to recall the major portion of the force, leaving some troops in the islands of Cheduba and Ramree, and the opposite coast of Sandway, where the climate was less unhealthy.<sup>2</sup> It seems that no precautionary measure adopted by the Government could have minimised the effects of the climate. The severity of the rains,<sup>3</sup> the exposure to the weather, which no precaution could prevent, and the intoxication in which European soldiers habitually indulged,<sup>4</sup> all had their share in producing

1 Between May and September, 1825, the European force, about 1,500 strong, lost 259 men and had, at the end of September, about 400 in hospital. During the same period the native corps, about 8,000 strong, lost 892 men and had 3,648 in hospital. (Burnard, *Sketch of the Medical Topography of Aracan*).

2 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, pp. 59-60.

3 During July, August and September, 1825, the fall of rain in Arakan was 123 inches, of which 103 inches fell in the first two months. (Burnard, *Sketch of the Medical Topography of Aracan*).

4 Percentage of death among Europeans—17·25. Percentage of death among Indians—11·0. Percentage of illness among Europeans—27·0. Percentage of illness among Indians—45·5. (Based on tables in Burnard, *Sketch of the Medical Topography in Aracan*).

disease.<sup>1</sup> The bad quality of the supplies may have been a factor in aggravating the evil to some extent, but "that the great mortality in Aracan owed its origin to this source, is a conclusion of which there is no proof."<sup>2</sup> It is significant that although the detachments sent against Talak and Ramree were supplied from the same stores, the percentage of sickness and death due to fever and dysentery was very much higher in the case of the former than in the case of the latter.<sup>3</sup>

#### NAVAL AND MILITARY OPERATIONS IN TENASSERIM, PEGU, AND UPPER BURMA<sup>4</sup>

The command of the Rangoon expedition was entrusted to Major-General Sir Archibald Campbell.<sup>5</sup>

1 Burnard, *Sketch of the Medical Topography of Aracan*.

2 Stevenson, *On the sickness prevailing in Aracan*.

3 Stevenson, *On the sickness prevailing in Aracan*. See also S. C., December 9, 1825, No. 32.

4 *Konbaungset Yazawin* (Vol. II, pp. 380-412) gives interesting details, which generally corroborate the English documents on which the following account is mainly based.

5 Born 1769: entered the Army, 1787: went to Bombay, 1788, and served under Sir Robert Abercromby, 1790-2: was at Seringapatam, 1792: at Cochin, 1795, and the defeat of the Dutch in Ceylon, 1796: was at the final siege of Seringapatam, 1799: served in Portugal and under Sir John Moore, 1808: was Brig.-General with the Portuguese, 1811: knighted, 1814: was

The Bengal army left Calcutta in the beginning of April. "The difficulty of collecting a sufficient force for a maritime expedition from Bengal, owing to the repugnance which the Sipahis entertained to embarking on board vessels," compelled Lord Amherst to requisition troops from Madras. Sir Thomas Munro was at that time Governor of that Presidency. He promptly responded to the Governor-General's request; a considerable force was speedily equipped.<sup>1</sup> With 2,175 troops from Bengal General Campbell reached Port Cornwallis<sup>2</sup> in the Great Andamans, where he was joined by 9,367 troops from Madras.

Portuguese Maj.-General, 1816, in command at Lisbon: commanded in Burma, 1824-6: governed the ceded provinces till 1829; Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick, 1831-7: Lt.-General, 1838: was unable through ill-health to accept the appointment of C.-in-C. in Bombay, 1839: died 1843. (Buckland, *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, p. 68).

1 S. C., March 5, 1824, No. 3, 4. Gleig, *Life of Sir Thomas Munro*, Vol. II, pp. 95, 109. Out of the 1,300 men composing the First Madras European Regiment, 863 of the most effective and healthy non-commissioned rank and file were picked for active field service in Burma. (*Historical Record of the First Madras European Regiment*, p. 439).

2 "The settlement of Port Cornwallis is not situated on the principal island, but on a smaller one within the harbour, named by the English Chatham Island; the utmost length of which does not exceed two miles, and the breadth little more than half a mile."—Symes, *An Account of an Embassy*, Vol. I, p. 152.

On May 5 the joint expedition left Port Cornwallis; five days later it reached Rangoon.<sup>1</sup>

On May 11 the British fleet anchored off the town; there was no opposition except 'some insignificant discharges of artillery.' This was soon silenced by the first few shots from a British ship. Two brigades landed and occupied the town, 'without having had occasion to discharge a single musket.' The Burmese troops fled into the neighbouring jungles.<sup>2</sup> "The members of Government fled at the first shot." Some hours later an American missionary named Hough, who had been imprisoned by the Burmese officers, came as their delegate to entreat that the firing might cease. General Campbell demanded the release of all European prisoners. The missionary went back, but did not come again. Next morning British reconnoitring parties found seven Europeans

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 47, 48, 49, 50, 52. We find in *Historical Record of the First Madras European Regiment* (p. 440) that the departure from Port Cornwallis took place on May 7.

<sup>2</sup> Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War*, pp. 7-8. He says, "In the neighbourhood of Rangoon itself nothing beyond some paddy ..... was found: the careful policy of the Burmese authorities had removed far beyond our reach everything that was likely to be of use to an invading army; and it will appear hereafter with how much vigilance and care they followed up the only system which could have rendered the situation and prospects of the invaders seriously embarrassing, or have afforded to themselves a hope of ultimate success."

at different places, strongly fettered, but deserted by their guards. The captured ordnance far exceeded in number anything General Campbell supposed Burma to possess.<sup>1</sup>

It seems that the Burmese totally failed to understand the significance of the capture of Rangoon. If we may believe the statements of Americans and Englishmen who had been living in Burma for years, the Burmese believed that their enemies 'had fallen at length into a snare, and that they were a sure prey.' They were only afraid that 'the marauders would escape' before the King's troops could reach Rangoon and capture them. "Throughout the town of Ava," we are told, "there was nothing but rejoicing at the event." The King expected that the arms and ammunition captured from the English would be useful in the coming war with Siam.<sup>2</sup>

After the fall of Rangoon, General Campbell occupied a strong Burmese stockade at Kemmendine, a village only four miles distant from the city. Here the Burmese 'fought with very great spirit' and tried in vain to resist British bayonets with their spears.<sup>3</sup>

General Campbell's troubles began after these initial successes. He found it very difficult to proceed

1. Wilson, *Documents*, No. 52, 54.

2. Wilson, *Documents*, No. 174(A).

3. Wilson, *Documents*, No. 53(A, B).

towards Upper Burma. The Burmese had fled from villages surrounding Rangoon. No supplies could be obtained;<sup>1</sup> no flotilla could be equipped. The army became absolutely dependent upon Bengal and Madras 'for every description of conveyance and food.' At the same time the Burmese adopted a system of harassing attacks. In a despatch dated June 1, 1824, General Campbell observed, "Every act of the enemy evinces a most marked determination of carrying hostility to the very last extremity; approaching our posts day and night under cover of an impervious and uncombustible jungle; constructing stockades and redoubts on every road and path-way, even within musquet shot of our sentries, and from these hidden fastnesses, carrying on a most barbarous and harassing warfare, firing upon our sentries at all hours of the night, and lurking on the outskirts of the jungle for the purpose of carrying off any unlucky wretch whom chance may throw in their way."<sup>2</sup>

1 "Such was by this time (end of May, 1824) the scarcity of provisions, the rations putrid, salt fish and badly-cured meat being the only description of food procurable, that the officers of the regiment were obliged to break up this mess: by dividing into small parties of three and four, and trusting to their own resources, they fared a little better." (*Historical Record of the First Madras European Regiment*, p. 443).

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 55(A). *Historical Sketch*, p. 27. It may be suspected that the hostility of the Burmese was

Yet General Campbell resolved to carry out the pre-arranged plan. On May 28 he marched out with his troops towards the interior. He advanced through thick jungles and rice fields and destroyed three stockades. At last he arrived at the village of Juayhy-vang. It was defended from two stockades, which were 'so well masked as not to be distinguished from a garden fence, even at the short distance of sixty yards.' General Campbell occupied these stockades by a determined and well-conducted attack under heavy rain.<sup>1</sup>

Information was soon available that the Burmese had returned to Kemmendine and built a large stockade there. An unsuccessful attack<sup>2</sup> was made on June 3. Two days later two Burmese officers of high

embittered by the disrespect shown to their religion by the invading troops. A European writer says, "..... under an idea that treasure was concealed in the Great Pagodah, it was ransacked and dug up in all directions by order of the Commander-in-Chief, but without success; the example was not, however, lost on the army at large, for whilst the Great Pagodah was being thus ransacked, the lesser ones were dug up and rifled by the soldiery, and in a short time nearly every one had been plundered of all they contained,—a few images made of stone or composition, and covered over with thin sheets of gold or silver, of little value except as curiosities."/ (*Historical Record of the First Madras European Regiment*, p. 442).

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 55(A).

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 56(A, B).

rank came to Rangoon and paid a visit to General Campbell. They said that they were envoys from the Viceroy of Pegu, and requested the General to see the Viceroy at Donabew, offering themselves as hostages for his safety. General Campbell did not accept this offer, but requested the envoys to forward his despatches to the capital. The envoys went to the Viceroy to secure his assent, but never returned to the British camp. Probably their real object was to gain time by suspending the British operations until the force assembling at Donabew should be ready to strike.<sup>1</sup>

On June 10 General Campbell moved upon the Burmese camp and stockades at Kemmendine with about 3,000 men. "The country, season and roads rendered the undertaking extremely arduous," wrote he. About two miles from the town, the head of the column was stopped by a stockade, which, however, was occupied within half an hour. Then the column moved forward nearly a mile and invested the great stockade. The attack began at day-light

1 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 30. According to *Kon-bawngset Yazawin* (Vol. II, p. 382), the English General refused to entertain proposals unless they came from the King. His views were not communicated to the King by the Burmese generals.



next morning. After two hours of firing it was found that the Burmese had evacuated the place, carrying off their dead and wounded.<sup>1</sup> "The chain of posts occupied by the enemy rendered flight at all times easy, and the thickness of the jungle necessarily prevented our observing when it took place." General Campbell reported, "The stockade ..... is one of great strength, and capable of being obstinately defended."<sup>2</sup> It was garrisoned by the most desperate crews of the enemy's war boats, and it cannot be doubted that the dreadful example of the day before, and awful effects of our opening fire, alone could have induced men possessed (as the Burmese unquestionably are) of great personal courage, to give it up. The object I had in view has thus been fully accomplished; a general pause and terror for our arms at present prevail among the troops lately opposed to us, and ..... every stockade in our neighbourhood has been evacuated, and the enemy has retired to some distance from our front."<sup>3</sup>

Such successes, however, did not materially

1 *Konbaungset Yazawin*, Vol. II, pp. 382-383.

2 "The stockade was at least fifteen feet high, and with neither ladders nor guns, it was impossible to escalate or breach it." (*Historical Record of the First Madras European Regiment*, p. 444).

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 57(A).

improve the position of the British expeditionary force in Pegu. The original plan of advancing towards Ava had to be given up for the time being. "An advance up the river, whilst either bank was commanded by the enemy in such formidable numbers and by strong entrenchments, was wholly out of the question, as, although conveyance for the troops and ordnance had been provided, the impossibility of deriving supplies from the country was undeniable, and it was equally impracticable to maintain a communication with Rangoon." Nor could General Campbell expel the Burmese forces from the Rangoon area; "the country and seasons stood them in the stead of discipline and courage." There was almost daily skirmishing at the outposts.<sup>1</sup> The rains set in, and brought disease along with their coolness. Sickness began to thin the ranks, and impair the energies of the invaders. It was aggravated by the use of spirituous liquor and the want of a sufficient supply of fresh meat<sup>2</sup> and vegetables. Fever, dysentery, scurvy and hospital gangrene raged furiously in the British camp. From June to October the average monthly admissions from the Artillery was

<sup>1</sup> *Historical Record of the First Madras European Regiment*, p. 449.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 67.

65 Europeans and 62 Indians, being nearly one-third of the greatest numerical strength of the former, and one-fourth of the latter. Large as was this number, it was considerably less in proportion than that of any European Regiment. The position improved on the setting of the cold season.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the close of June General Campbell received information that the Burmese were collecting troops for the recovery of Rangoon.<sup>2</sup> On the morning of July 1 all doubts were removed. A British despatch says, "Three columns of the enemy estimated at one thousand men each, were seen crossing the front of our position, moving towards our right: and the jungle in front of the great Dagon Pagoda, and along the whole extent of our line to the left, was occupied by a large force, but on this side, from the nature of the ground, it was impossible to ascertain either the disposition or strength of the enemy." The Burmese took post on a hill about 400 yards from the British position, and commenced a feeble and harmless fire from some jinjals and swivels. Within a short time British troops occupied the Burmese post, 'the enemy flying in every direction towards

<sup>1</sup> *Transactions of the Medical and Physical Society of Calcutta*, Vol. III.

<sup>2</sup> *Konbaungset Yazawin*, Vol. II, pp. 385-386.

their favourite haunt, and only place of safety, the jungle.' "Thus ended", says General Campbell, "the mighty attack that was to have driven us into sea, defeated with the greatest ease by the three weak companies of sepoy, and two pieces of artillery." The Burmese, about 12,000 strong, left at least 100 men dead on the field. The British had not one man either killed or wounded.<sup>1</sup>

Petty skirmishes went on for a few days, and on July 8 General Campbell 'determined to make as general an attack as the very woody and inundated state of the country would possibly admit of.' A combined military and naval attack was directed against the Burmese stockades at Dallah. Ten strong stockades were captured, and more than 800 Burmese troops were killed.<sup>2</sup> Among the slain was the General himself, Thamba Woongyee,<sup>3</sup> who had tried to animate his men to resistance, not only by his exhortations, but by personal example. This conduct, observes General Campbell, was contrary to the usual practice of the Burman Chiefs, who were rarely even present in an engagement which they directed.<sup>4</sup>

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 58.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 58, 59, 60.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 60.

4 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 34.

British officers found his dinner on the table—so sudden and unexpected was the attack—and partook of it.<sup>1</sup> Another Burmese leader of rank fell in a personal struggle with a British officer. It was expected that the capture of so many stockades by so inferior a force and without any assistance from artillery would shake the confidence of the Burmese in their 'bamboo ramparts.'<sup>2</sup>

Towards the middle of July a detachment was sent to capture Keykloe, about 12 or 15 miles from Rangoon. The inundated state of the country made it impossible for the British troops to reach that place; so they returned.<sup>3</sup>

Early in August General Campbell received information that the Burmese Governor of Syriam was making arrangements for the purpose of finishing and defending a large field work, which was to command the Pegu or Syriam river and protect the surrounding country. So he proceeded to Syriam with 600 troops. On his arrival there he found that the Burmese had taken their post in an old Portuguese fort repaired for the purpose. They made a feeble attempt to obstruct the advance of the invaders, but 'abandoned the

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 59.

2 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 34.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 60.

place with the utmost precipitation' as soon as they were attacked.<sup>1</sup>

About the same time General Campbell received information that the inhabitants of Dallah were ~~resisting~~ the orders of the King for a general levy of every man capable of bearing arms. A detachment of 400 troops was sent 'to assist the opposition and escape of the discontented.' The stockade at Dallah was captured.<sup>2</sup>

The advance towards Amarapura being temporarily postponed, it was decided to employ a part of the Rangoon force in reducing the maritime province of Tenasserim. This province 'contained a valuable tract of sea coast' and was likely to 'afford supplies of cattle and grain.'<sup>3</sup> An expedition under Colonel Miles sailed from the Rangoon river on August 26 and arrived near Tavoy on September 1. Next morning two Burmese brought to Colonel Miles a communication from the second officer of the fort, stating his readiness to seize or kill the Governor of the province. Colonel Miles said that the Governor should be seized and confined. Within a few hours Colonel Miles was in possession of the

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 61. S. C., September 10, 1824, No. 9.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 62(A, B).

3 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 35.

fort, without any opposition. He reported, "The population is very great, and from the strength and extent of the works (all being of brick and very high) our loss must have been very great, had any defence been attempted. The capture of the Mayhoon,<sup>1</sup> his brother and family, with his principal adherents, completely weakens the enemy, and places us in a commanding situation to cripple any exertion in this quarter."<sup>2</sup>

Having left some troops and a ship for the protection of Tavoy, Colonel Miles proceeded to Mergui, where he arrived on October 6. Instead of responding to his demand for unconditional surrender the Burmese opened fire, which was 'heavy and well-directed.' Miles succeeded in capturing the stockade. He reported, "More than common attention had been paid in arranging the defence of the place, and the natural strength of the ground gave the greatest advantage to them. Their batteries were placed on the brows of the different hills, commanding the shipping ... the enemy had 3,500 men in arms."<sup>3</sup>

In the meanwhile the Burmese were following their harassing tactics in the Dallah district. They

1 Governor.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 63(B). S. C., October 1, 1824, No. 20. *Konbaungset Yazawin*, Vol. II, p. 388.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 63(C).

rushed from the creeks and *nullahs*, with which the country abounds, upon unarmed boats. They also repaired the stockades captured by British troops. General Campbell thereupon determined to drive them ~~not only~~ from the stockades, but permanently to a greater distance. On September 2 Major Evans succeeded in capturing the stockades. The Burmese escaped into the jungle; the swampy state of the country and the thickness of the jungle prevented British troops from cutting off their retreat.<sup>1</sup> A few days later the Burmese tried, unsuccessfully, to occupy a British post at Dallah.<sup>2</sup>

On August 29 the Burmese made an unsuccessful attempt to capture the great Pagoda of Rangoon. An extract from 'the Government Gazette,'<sup>3</sup> dated September 30, states the position as follows: "It is said, that in the Burmese army there is a corps of about 3,000 men, specially denominated warriors: of these again, some hundreds assume the title of *Invulnerables*; both one and the other enjoying immunities unknown to other subjects, particularly the latter class, who, in general, remain about the person of the King. Lately, a large body from this redoubtable legion made a vow, that if His Majesty would

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 64.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 66(B).

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 65.



send or allow them to go to Rangoon, they would retrieve the national honour by the immediate expulsion of the British army. Leave was granted, and the *Invulnerables*,<sup>1</sup> headed by the *Attawoon* of the Prince of Tharawaddy, proposed, in the first instance, to carry by assault the great Pagoda." They appeared before the Pagoda during the darkest part of the night, but fled as soon as they were fired upon. This incident had its full effect upon the Burmese troops, already damped by fear and constant disappointment. The *Invulnerables*, instead of joining the Prince of Tharawaddy after their defeat, fled and concealed themselves in the hills to the eastward.<sup>2</sup>

Towards the close of September General Fraser proceeded to Paulang in order to prevent the Burmese from constructing combustible rafts and boats for the destruction of British shipping. He occupied several stockades and breast-works without encountering any opposition.<sup>3</sup>

Early in October, British troops suffered a temporary reverse at Keykloe. On October 5 Colonel Smith advanced with 800 men and occupied a stockade at Todagabe. Here a prisoner informed him

1 S. C., October 29, 1824, No. 17.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 67.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 68(B). S. C., October 29, 1824, No. 18.

that "the Burmese were in considerable force in the neighbourhood, with guns and a party of horse, very strongly stockaded. Colonel Smith secured reinforcements and began to advance. A succession of breast-works on the route was stormed and carried. When Colonel Smith arrived before the stockade at Keykloe, the Burmese observed a sullen silence and did not fire a shot. When British troops were ready with ladders, volleys of grape and musketry were discharged upon the party at the distance of 50 or 60 yards with an effect and regularity hitherto unequalled in Burmese warfare. Colonel Smith's men were seized with panic, and lay down to secure themselves from the 'awful and destructive fire.' He was compelled to retreat. His troops lost their discipline and 'crowded indiscriminately into one general mass.' Finally, however, the party arrived at Todagabe without facing any trouble on the route.<sup>1</sup>

The Burmese were not allowed to exult over their victory. On the same day that Colonel Smith's detachment returned to head-quarters, Brigadier McCreagh was sent by General Campbell to dislodge them from Keykloe. On his way he found 'the horrid spectacle of the bodies of sepoys and pioneers

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 69(B). *Konbaungset Yazawin*, Vol. II, p. 389. We are told that the Burmese could not follow the British due to the darkness of the night.

... fastened to the trunks of trees on the road side, mangled and mutilated in every manner that savage cruelty could devise.' On October 11 he arrived near the Burmese entrenchments and found that they had already evacuated a pagoda which held the key to the position. Later on he learned from a few Burmese stragglers that the *Rayhoon* (with his people, about 3,000) had retreated to a village called Kaghahie, where he had a reserve of 1,000 more people and a strong stockade. He thereupon advanced to that village. The road was 'embarrassed with felled trees' and defended with strong breast-works. But the movements of the British troops were so rapid and unexpected that the Burmese fled in all directions through the neighbouring jungle. The village itself was deserted by the inhabitants, and it was burning. The available information showed that the Burmese were in a state of utter dispersion and panic.<sup>1</sup>

As far back as July, 1824, General Campbell was aware that the Burmese had erected a very strong stockade at Thantabain, upon the Lyng river, which joins the Rangoon river above Kemmendine. For some months this stockade was used by the Burmese as a post of observation, but in October it became the head-quarters of highly placed ministers, who received

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 70(B).

daily reinforcements and collected large supplies of military stores for the future operations of their army in that quarter.<sup>1</sup> These preparations demanded a response. So General Campbell sent Major Evans to ~~attack~~ Thantabain. The naval part of the expedition was led by Captain Chadds. They reached the place on October 7. The village was defended by three long breast-works, with a very extensive stockade, constructed of large teak beams, and fourteen large war boats, each mounting a gun, were anchored so as to defend the approach to it. On October 8 the principal stockade was carried by assault without a struggle. Major Evans describes it in these words: "It is, without exception, the strongest work of the kind I have ever seen—the length of the front and rear faces is two hundred yards, and that of the side faces one hundred and fifty. It is built of strong timber, fifteen feet high, with a platform inside all round, five feet broad and eight feet from the ground—upon this platform were a number of wooden guns, and piles of single and double-headed wooden shot, and many jinjals, and below we found seven pieces of iron and brass ordnance. In front, the stockade is strengthened by breast-works and regular demi-lanes,

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 70(C).

and would contain with ease above two thousand men." It is strange that such a place should be surrendered without a struggle by highly placed ministers. Major Evans rightly claims that this incident 'sufficiently denoted the terror we inspired'. He returned without the loss of a single man. The Burmese must have suffered severe loss, but only 17 dead bodies were found within the stockade.<sup>1</sup>

On October 11 General Campbell sent an expedition under Colonel Godwin to capture Martaban.<sup>2</sup> The expedition reached Martaban on October 29, being delayed on the way by the ignorance of the pilots. The place was found to be 'uncommonly strong and commanding.' Colonel Godwin wrote, "The place rests at the bottom of a very high hill, washed by a very beautiful and extensive sheet of water; on its right a rocky mound, on which was placed a two-gun battery, with a deep *nullah* under it. This battery communicates with the usual stockade of timber, and behind this a work of masonry, varying from twelve to twenty feet thick, with small embrasures for either cannon or musketry. The stockade runs along the margin of the water for more than three-quarters of a mile, where it joins a larger

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 70(D). S. C., November 5, 1824, No. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 74(A).

pagoda, which projects into the water in the form of a bastion. The defences then continue a short distance and end at a *nullah*, on the other side of which all is thick jungle ... The whole defence is the water-line, ~~with~~ its flanks protected." On the night of October 29 there was a cannonade from both sides. Next morning Colonel Godwin landed his troops and advanced under a heavy fire of musketry. Maha Udina, the governor, a bold and active chief, warmly defended the place at first, but evacuated the entrenchments before the British troops entered. His force suffered a severe loss.<sup>1</sup> "The town was at first deserted, but the inhabitants, chiefly Taliens or nations of Pegu, gradually returned, and the post was occupied by a British detachment throughout the remainder of the war."<sup>2</sup>

Towards the close of November General Campbell reported the submission of Tenasserim and the town and small province of Yeah. "These places," he says, "of their own accord, requested our protection, and the whole Burmese coast, from Rangoon to the eastward, is now subject to the British arms. The enemy's troops which fled from the captured towns ... landed in the district of Dalla."<sup>3</sup>

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 74(C).

2 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 40.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 75(A).

So many defeats naturally created 'uneasiness and alarm' in the Court of Ava. Maha Bandula, who had been recalled from Arakan soon after the battle of Ramu, was entrusted with the task of exterminating the invaders or carrying them captives to the ~~capital~~, "where the chiefs were already calculating on the number of slaves who were, from this source of supply, to swell their train."<sup>1</sup> On October 16 General Campbell reported, "The Bundoola ... has arrived at Donabew, with unlimited powers, and is to make a general attack upon our position early in the ensuing moon ... The court of Ava has already made great exertions in supplying their army in this quarter with such materials as the country and capital contain ... I should conclude their arsenal department must now be at a very low ebb."<sup>2</sup> On November 25 he wrote, "Maha Bundoola is said to have been nominated to the chief command, and I make no doubt we shall, ere long, have the whole strength and talent of the empire to contend with in this neighbourhood."<sup>3</sup>

Such an attack the British troops were now well-prepared to receive. The comparative repose which they had enjoyed in October and November, the gradual approach of a more healthy season, and

1 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 39.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 71.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 75(A).

improved supplies,<sup>1</sup> contributed materially to diminish the number of the sick, and to preserve the health of those who had hitherto escaped.”<sup>2</sup>

On December 8, 1824, General Campbell reported<sup>3</sup> as follows: “The long-threatened and, on my part, no less anxiously wished-for event has at length taken place: Maha Bundoola, said to be accompanied by the Princes of Tonghoo and Surrawuddy, appeared in front of my position on the morning of the 1st instant, at the head of the whole united force of the Burma empire, amounting, upon the most moderate calculation, to from fifty to sixty thousand men, apparently well armed, with a numerous artillery and a body of Cassay horse ... it had pleased God to ... crown the heroic efforts of my gallant little army with a most complete and signal victory.” The absence of Colonel Godwin at Martaban, and of a strong detachment under Colonel Mallet who had gone to ‘display the British flag in the ancient capital of Pegu,’ placed General Campbell at a temporary disadvantage.

1 On October 16 General Campbell reported, “ ... 180 bullocks have arrived from Madras, and more are daily expected. They are the best caste of the draft cattle on that coast, and will be highly useful.” (Wilson, *Documents*, No. 71).

2 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 39.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 76(A).



On December 1 the Burmese issued from the jungle and opened a smart attack upon the British post at Kemmendine. General Campbell encouraged them to come to the more open country, where he could at any time attack them to advantage. ~~The~~ The right corps of the Burmese army had occupied Dallah and taken post in the neighbouring jungles, from which they opened a distant fire upon British shipping. "Tremendous fire-rafts and crowds of war boats were every day employed in the ... vain endeavour to drive the shipping from their station off the place." The right wing and centre of the Burmese army occupied a range of hills immediately in front of the great Dagon Pagoda, covered with so thick a forest as to be impenetrable to all but Burmese troops. Their left extended nearly two miles further, to the village of Puzendoon.

In the afternoon of December 1 a small British detachment burst through the Burmese entrenchments, carrying dismay and terror into their ranks, and slaying a large number. In the evening a 'cloud of skirmishers' came near the Pagoda and began 'a harassing and galling fire' upon the British defences, but they were repulsed.

During the night the Burmese advanced and fortified a height in front of the north gate of the Pagoda. On the morning of December 2 British

troops drove them from one breast-work to another, fighting them in 'the very holes they had dug, finally to prove their graves.' Colonel Mallet returned from the old city of Pegu (which he had found completely deserted)<sup>1</sup> and assisted General Campbell in the operations of the following days.

The Burmese spent December 3 and December 4 mainly in improving their entrenchments. The attacks upon Kemmendine continued with unabated violence. British ships successfully defended the passage of the river against 'the most furious assaults of the enemy's war-boats, advancing under cover of the most tremendous fire-rafts which the unwearied exertions of British sailors could alone have conquered.'<sup>2</sup>

On December 5 General Campbell directed a decisive attack against the left wing of the Burmese army. Captain Chadds, the senior naval officer, moved up to the Puzendoon creek during the night and commenced a cannonade on the Burmese rear at day-light. About 1,700 British troops attacked the Burmese and succeeded in completely defeating and dispersing them. "The Cassay horse fled, mixed with the retreating infantry, and all their artillery, stores, and reserve depots, which had cost them so

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 79.

<sup>2</sup> The operations of the ships are described in detail in Wilson, *Documents*, No. 78(A), 78(B), 78(C), 78(D), 78(E).

much toil and labour to get up, with a great quantity of small arms, gilt *chattahs*, standards and other trophies, fell into our hands." So wrote General Campbell in his despatch to Calcutta. He continued, "Never was victory more complete or more decided, and never was the triumph of discipline and valour over the disjointed efforts of irregular courage and infinitely superior numbers, more conspicuous."

Maha Bandula brought up the scattered remnant of his defeated left to strengthen his right and centre and carried his trenches in front of the Pagoda. On December 7 General Campbell directed an assault on the trenches. The Burmese were compelled to fly away, abandoning their guns, a great quantity of arms of every description, and the ladders they had brought to escalate the Pagoda. General Campbell wrote, "The total defeat of Bundoola's army was now fully accomplished. His loss in killed and wounded, from the nature of the ground, it is impossible to calculate, but I am confident I do not exceed the fairest limit, when I state it at 5,000 men. In every other respect the mighty host, which so lately threatened to overwhelm us, now scarcely exists ... Humbled, dispersing, and deprived of their arms, they cannot, for a length of time, again meet us in the field, and the lesson they have now received will, I am confident, prove a salutary antidote to the

native arrogance and vanity of the Burmese nation ... those means which the Burmese government were seven months in organising for our annihilation, have been completely destroyed by us in the course of seven days. Of 300 pieces of ordnance that accompanied the grand army, 240 are now in our camp, and in musquets, their loss is to them irreparable." The loss on the British side was 26 killed and about 250 wounded.<sup>1</sup>

On December 9 a British detachment repulsed the Burmese troops from Dallah. Many Burmese were slain in the short conflict that ensued: they were driven at the point of the bayonet into the jungle in their rear and 10 good guns, with many small arms, fell into the hands of the victors.<sup>2</sup> On December 15 General Campbell secured another 'great victory over the army of Bundoola, recollected after his late defeat, and considerably reinforced on his retreat.'<sup>3</sup> On December 12 a Burmese deserter told General Campbell that the Burmese would again attack the British, 'determined to sacrifice their lives at the dearest rate, as they had nothing else to expect than to do so ignominiously, by returning to the

1 Wilson, *Documents*, p. 89.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 77.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 81(A).

presence of their king, disgraced and defeated as they had been.' On the morning of December 14 Maha Bandula's emissaries set fire to Rangoon; one-fourth of the town was destroyed. Large bodies of Burmese troops were transported during the course of the day from the Dallah to the Rangoon side of the river.

On the morning of December 15 British troops began an attack against Burmese troops stockaded in the village of Kokain about three miles from the Great Pagoda. General Campbell was "disappointed to find that Maha Bandula did not command in person, having retired to a distance, leaving his orders with a Chief." He proudly reported, "When it is known, that thirteen hundred British infantry stormed, and carried by assault, the most formidable, entrenched and stockaded works I ever saw, defended by upwards of twenty thousand men, I trust it is unnecessary for me to say more in praise of men performing such a prodigy. The prisoners declared<sup>1</sup> that our appearance before their works, was treated by them all (from their Generals downward) with the utmost derision and contempt, so confident were they in their immense superiority in numbers, and the fancied security of the works they had cons-

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 84.

trusted." There were naval engagements on the river, and Captain Chadds succeeded in securing 30 Burmese war-boats and destroying more than 150.<sup>1</sup> On January 11 and 12, 1825, a British detachment occupied a Burmese post at Syriam.<sup>2</sup>

"These several actions," says Wilson, "changed the character of the war. The Burmans no longer dared attempt offensive operations, but restricted themselves to the defence of their positions along the river ..."<sup>3</sup> Maha Bandula established his headquarters at Donabew and tried to concentrate there as many men as he could attract.<sup>4</sup> A few days later General Campbell received a letter written by Maha Bandula to some European residents of Rangoon.<sup>5</sup> The Burmese General expressed his surprise that the English had preferred war to compliance with the Burmese demand for the surrender of the two Manipur Princes, and requested the addressees to afford him all information regarding the wishes or intentions of the English. Wilson remarks that this letter, "although of a vague and indefinite character, evinced a material alteration in the temper of the chieftain, and a

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 81(B).

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 82.

3 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 43.

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 82, 83.

5 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 83.

disposition, if not to treat for peace, to respect his antagonists. The tenour of the letter, and its address to unofficial persons, precluded its being made the basis of negotiation."<sup>1</sup> General Campbell asked Maha Bandula to communicate with him direct. No reply was received.

Towards the close of January it was reported that Maha Bandula was maintaining a sullen and suspicious attitude at Donabew. He was unwilling to hold any communication with any one not living within the pale of his own defence, because he was afraid of the King's resentment. A Burmese Chief who had collected 20,000 men was vainly trying to gain access to him.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to assess the truth of these rumours which reached the British camp at intervals.

As early as March, 1824, Sir Thomas Munro had suggested<sup>3</sup> the desirability of encouraging the Peguers to throw off the Burmese yoke. Later on he wrote,<sup>4</sup> "As the southern and most fertile provinces of the Burman empire were formerly under Pegu, it would perhaps be advisable to proclaim the restoration of the ancient family, and to guarantee to

1 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 60.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 119.

3 Gleig, *Life of Munro*, Vol. II, p. 107.

4 Gleig, *Life of Munro*, Vol. II, pp. 123-124.

it the possession of whatever part of its old territory might be recovered from Ava. Were this done, Sir Archibald Campbell would soon have a friendly instead of a hostile country, along a great part of the line of his operations. If we hold out to the people no hope of their not being placed again under their ancient sovereign, but leave them to suppose, that whenever our troops are withdrawn, they are again to fall under the Burman Government, we must expect no co-operation from them, but to be harassed by their withholding supplies and cutting off stragglers." To these arguments Lord Amherst replied,<sup>1</sup> "We are at present quite in the dark as to the existence of a single individual of their former royal race ... Nothing like a disposition to revolt has at any time manifested itself, I believe, during the present generation; and as circumstances are at this moment, I imagine it would be hopeless to expect that we could excite a disposition to throw off a yoke which has long ceased, at least, to be a foreign one." Sir Thomas Munro recognised the force of these views, but did not 'despair of such an event (i.e., revolt of Pegu) taking place.' He wrote,<sup>2</sup> "We know that in India, when a race of ancient princes has been extir-

1 Gleig, *Life of Munro*, Vol. II, p. 124.

2 Gleig, *Life of Munro*, Vol. II, pp. 125-126.



pated, persons claiming descent from them frequently start up to recover their real or pretended rights ... there can, I think, be no doubt that ... the same would happen in Pegu. What we want there is some party hostile to the Government; we should derive from it information regarding the roads and the country, and aid in procuring provisions. We want no military assistance ... .”

The attitude of the Talaings after the severe defeats inflicted by the British army upon Maha Bandula amply justified the wisdom of the policy so eloquently advocated by Sir Thomas Munro. Many Talaing refugees in Siam were prepared to join the British force with the purpose of avenging the slaughter of their fathers and grand-fathers. They were encouraged by the King of Siam<sup>1</sup> who was prepared to adopt a friendly attitude to the enemies of his hereditary foe.<sup>2</sup> Some Siamese Generals wrote a letter to

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 119.

2 Lord Amherst wrote to Sir Thomas Munro on April 2, 1824, "The Siamese, inveterate enemies of the Burmese, would cause a most powerful diversion in the South. The aid to be derived from the Siamese, in the event of protracted hostilities, has entered deeply into our calculation. But I am not disposed, if we can possibly avoid it, to engage too largely in the intrigues and politics of the Indo-Chinese nations, or to enter into engagements which we are not prepared at all hazards to fulfil ... The balance is now tolerably equal between them (i.e., the Burmese)

Sir Archibald Campbell, congratulating him on his success.<sup>1</sup> The Talaings were encouraged by a proclamation<sup>2</sup> issued by General Campbell, asking them to place themselves under British protection and inviting them to choose a chief whom the British authorities were prepared to recognize. Many Talaing

and the Siamese, and they help to keep each other in order." Sir Thomas Munro replied on May 8, 1824, "...such Kingdoms as these (i.e., Burma and Siam) are in a perpetual state of fluctuation, and can never, for any long period, remain like the old governments of Europe, within the same limits. Our best policy is not to look so much to the preservation of any balance between them, as to the weakening of that power which is most able to disturb our frontier." (Gleig, *Life of Munro*, Vol. II, pp. 110-111, 115-116). Snodgrass (*Narrative of the Burmese War*, pp. 80-82) gives an account of Siamese policy which may not be far from the truth. The King of Siam was alarmed when the British captured Mergui and Tavoy; he knew that the establishment of a British settlement in Tenasserim was 'fraught with danger' to his country. The Burmese negotiated with him and asked him to join them against the British. Courted from both sides, the King of Siam 'thought it proper to pursue a safer course endeavouring to persuade both parties of his friendly disposition and determination of taking an early part in the war, but cautiously abstaining from any decided hostility on either side.' He did not entertain favourable opinions about the chances of British success against Burma, and the danger to his capital due to its exposure to naval attack was probably the only factor which prevented him from trying to seize Tenasserim from the British.

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 120.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 121(B).

soldiers in the Burmese army deserted,<sup>1</sup> and during the rest of the war the Peguers rendered substantial assistance to the British army. On April 16, 1826, Sir Thomas Munro wrote to the Duke of Wellington,<sup>2</sup> "I believe that there is no man who is not now convinced, that the Taliens (Peguers) deserted the Burman Government, sought independence, and in the hope of obtaining it, though without any pledge on our part, aided in supplying all our wants with a zeal which could not have been surpassed by our subjects."

At this stage it became necessary for the British army to advance to the interior and to march towards the capital of Burma. Sir Archibald Campbell rejected Captain Canning's old scheme<sup>3</sup> and proposed that he should assemble his troops at Old Pegu and advance by land. Lord Amherst thought that it would be better to remove the army (leaving only a defensive garrison at Rangoon) to Arakan and to proceed to Amarapura through one of the passes of the Arakan Yoma mountains.<sup>4</sup> Reports were collected about the comparative advantages and disadvantages

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 121(A).

2 Gleig, *Life of Munro*, Vol. II, p. 163.

3 See p. 236.

4 S. C., August 6, 1824, No. 4.

of three passes, of which the Aing was the most important.<sup>1</sup> Sir Thomas Munro naturally joined this discussion and expressed his views as follows:<sup>2</sup> "The original plan of the invasion of Aya was romantic and visionary, and was, I believe, suggested by Captain Canning. It was, that Sir A. Campbell, after occupying Rangoon and collecting a sufficient number of boats, should, with the help of the southwest wind, proceed against the stream to Ummarapoor at once. This, even if it had been practicable, was too hazardous, as it would have exposed the whole force to destruction, from the intercepting of its supplies ... even if there had been a sufficient number of boats, Sir A. Campbell would have been justified, by our ignorance of the country and of the enemy, in not making the attempt until he should have received more troops, to leave detachments at different places on the river, to keep open his communication with Rangoon. When Captain Canning's plan of sailing to the capital was abandoned, two others were thought of, but both were impracticable: one was to proceed in the dry season by land from Pegu; the other was to re-embark the troops, land somewhere on the coast

1 S. C., August 13, 1824, No. 25.

2 Letter to Mr. Sullivan, July 11, 1825. Gleig, *Life of Munro*, Vol. II, pp. 150-151.

of Aracan, and march from thence through the hills to the Irawaddy. I said that re-embarkation would be attended with the most disgraceful and disastrous consequence; that the measure would be supposed to have proceeded from fear, that it would encourage the enemy, and would deter the people of the country, wherever we might again land, from coming near us, or bringing us provisions for sale; that we knew nothing of the coast of Aracan or the interior; that if the troops landed there, they would be in greater distress than at Rangoon, because they would find less rice, and be as much exposed to the weather; that they could not possibly penetrate into the country without carriage cattle, of which they had none;<sup>1</sup> and that they could be at last compelled to re-embark again, without effecting anything. I said that the nature of the country, and the difficulty of sending draught and carriage cattle by sea,<sup>2</sup> pointed

1 Sir Thomas Munro wrote to Lord Amherst on February 2, 1825, "Sir Archibald Campbell had never distinctly stated what number of carriage bullocks would enable him to act efficiently: it does not appear to me that less than four, ~~five~~, or perhaps six thousand, would answer the purpose... He wants bullocks much more than soldiers." (Gleig, *Life of Munro*, Vol. II, pp. 140-141).

2 Sir Thomas Munro wrote to Lord Amherst on January 15, 1825, "...the inhabitants of all these countries (between Rangoon and Martaban). if well treated. will be ready to sell cattle

out clearly that our main line of operations could only be by the course of the Irawaddy, partly by land and partly by water, and that this would give us the double advantage of passing through the richest part of the enemy's country; and of cutting off his communication with it ... "

We make no apology for having quoted this long extract, because it gives in a nutshell all relevant arguments for and against the different routes.<sup>1</sup> The route advocated by Sir Thomas Munro was finally adopted.<sup>2</sup> A detachment, about 2,400 strong, advanced by land; another, about 1,200 strong, proceeded by water. The flotilla consisted of 62 boats. A third detachment, about 800 strong, was sent to Bassein, where the inhabitants had manifested a friendly disposition. The rest of the force, nearly 4,000 effective men, was left in Rangoon, with instructions to follow the advancing detachment as soon as means of transport could be collected. All arrangements being completed, General Campbell began to march on February 13, 1825.<sup>3</sup>

to our army at cheaper rates, and in greater numbers, than they can possibly be sent from India." (Gleig, *Life of Munro*, Vol. II, p. 139).

1 See also S. C., August 26, 1825, No. 78.

2 S. C., August 26, 1825, No. 68.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 123(A), 123(B).

During his march General Campbell was 'received with kindness and friendship' by the villagers. He tried to 'confirm the hope of peace they entertained' by issuing a proclamation<sup>1</sup> promising to alleviate the miseries of the 'Burmese subjects. The proclamation had its effect, for it brought to the British army some assistance in rice, road-making and slaughter buffaloes.<sup>2</sup>

The water column advanced slowly and took position near Donabew on March 5. Here Maha Bandula was waiting, with the whole Burmese force at his back.<sup>3</sup> On March 7 General Cotton, officer-in-charge of the water column, attacked one of Bandula's outworks and carried it, with a loss to the Burmese of about 500 men.<sup>4</sup> But he found the principal stockade of the Burmese too strong,<sup>5</sup> and decided not to make any further attack until he was re-inforced. When the incident was reported to

1 February 1, 1825. Wilson, *Documents*, No. 124(B).

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 124(A).

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 124(A).

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 125(C).

5 It was 'composed of solid beams of teak, from 15 to 17 feet high; behind which were the thick ramparts, the whole surrounded by a large deep ditch, filled with spikes, nails, and holes, and beyond it several rows of palisading, and an abatis of great breadth.' (*Historical Record of the First Madras European Regiment*, p. 471).

General Campbell, who was then waiting at U-an-deet, 26 miles from Sarrawah, he at once began his march and reached Donabew on March 25. On March 29 he reported to the Government, "We are now, night and day, employed in preparations for the reduction of Donabew. It is commanded by Maha Bundoola in person, and the garrison is rated at fifteen thousand fighting men, of whom ten thousand are musqueteers."<sup>1</sup>

On April 2 General Campbell occupied the fort and different redoubts of Donabew, with all the ordnance, stores, depots, etc.; the Burmese had evacuated them in a hurry in the course of the previous night.<sup>2</sup> Maha Bandula was killed by a rocket while going his rounds on the morning of April 1. His death caused a panic among the troops, and no entreaty of the other chiefs could prevail upon them to remain longer together.<sup>3</sup> Eleven Burmese war-boats and a large number of other boats were captured.<sup>4</sup>

General Campbell left Donabew on April 3 and

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 125(A).

2 S. C., May 6, 1825, No. 13.

3 His brother tried at first to conceal the news of his death in order to prevent confusion in the army. (*Konbaungset Yazawin*, Vol. II, p. 397).

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 126.



reached Prome on April 26.<sup>1</sup> The Burmese were afraid, and fled.<sup>2</sup> The British General made his march without opposition or annoyance of any kind, on the part of the Burmese, and except the totally deserted state of the country, and the consequent difficulty of obtaining supplies of any kind, the line of march had not been marked by any act of hostility since his departure from Rangoon. It was reported from Rangoon that the chiefs of Syriam and Dallah had voluntarily made their submission and that a Siamese army was marching towards Martaban.<sup>3</sup> On April 19 General Campbell received a letter from two high officials of the Burmese court,<sup>4</sup> expressing a desire for the restoration of peace. General Campbell replied that he was ready to enter into negotiations if duly authorised envoys were sent to him.<sup>5</sup> In reply<sup>6</sup> the Burmese officials, who were probably acting under the guidance of the King's brother, the Prince of Tharawaddy, professed satisfaction and requested General Campbell to halt where he had already arrived, instead of marching to Prome. General Campbell

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 127(A), 129(A).

2 *Konbaungset Yazawin*, Vol. II, p. 400.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 128(A).

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 128(B).

5 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 128(C).

6 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 129(B).

then suspected that "the retention of Prome was more at heart than any serious wish or direct authority to sue for peace." His suspicion was confirmed by the report that 30 pieces of brass artillery and a considerable reinforcement in troops were on their way down from the capital. He, therefore, replied that he would march to Prome, but halt at a certain distance for the purpose of receiving the Burmese deputies. This letter could not be delivered, for, when his messenger reached Prome, he found the place already deserted by Burmese officials and troops.<sup>1</sup> Thereupon General Campbell marched to Prome and took possession of the city without firing a shot. The Burmese had left about 100 pieces of artillery and extensive granaries well filled with grain. The town was on fire when the British force entered it. General Campbell wrote, "The surrounding hills were generally fortified to their very summits, and commanded our advance, presenting a position of a very formidable appearance, and, in reality, so naturally strong, that 10,000 steady soldiers could have defended it against any attack of ten times that force. The stockade itself is complete, and great labour must have been bestowed upon it; indeed, both in materials, and workmanship, it surpasses anything we have hitherto

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 129(A), 131(A).

seen in this country ... The inhabitants are coming in great numbers, and even chiefs of towns and villages are now suing for passes of protection."<sup>1</sup>

After leaving Prome the Prince of Tharawaddy retired direct to the capital, with the remnants of his force.<sup>2</sup> It seems that he was now sincerely desirous of terminating the war. He visited the capital for the express purpose of advocating a treaty of peace, in opposition to the 'infatuated' views of the war party of the *Hlutdaw* (Royal Council), at the head of which were the Queen and her brother.

The approach of the rainy season compelled the British force to establish itself in cantonments at Prome.<sup>3</sup> Wilson says, "Previous to the setting in of the rains, the thermometer had risen in the shade to 110°, but the nights remained cool, and the climate was not found unhealthy. The monsoon brought with it its ordinary effects upon the condition of the troops, but by no means to the same extent

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 130, 139. S. C., May 27, 1825, No. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 131(A).

<sup>3</sup> At Prome General Campbell collected the bells found in the pagodas, in order to prevent the Burmese from utilising the metal for warlike purposes. The Supreme Government warned him not to do anything which 'might wound the religious susceptibilities of the Burmese. (S. C., November 4, 1825, No. 15, 16).

as in the previous season at Rangoon, the face of the country being mountainous, and free from swamps, and of some considerable elevation above the sea." The people resumed their usual avocations and began to form markets along the river, and especially at Prome and Rangoon, by which the resources of the country now began to be fully available for carriage and support.<sup>1</sup> The troops remained inactive during the months of June, July and August. "The monsoon, however, proved mild: the men were comfortably hutted: there was no want of provisions, and, although extensive sickness occurred, it was not more than was fairly attributable to the nature of the service and the season of the year, and was by no means so severe as that of the previous rains at Rangoon, nor, indeed, more so than it would have been in any of the lower Gangetic provinces. The casualties were comparatively few."<sup>2</sup>

After the occupation of Prome General Campbell sent a detachment under Colonel Godwin towards Tounghoo, in order to ascertain the state of the country and the strength of the Burmese army in that district. Colonel Godwin left Prome on May 5 and marched in a north-easterly course till May 11. "The

1 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 67.

2 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 70.

troops having got into a mountainous country, with heavy roads, want of water, the probability of the monsoon, and the total absence of all supplies in this almost uninhabited country, determined me to change my route," said he in his report to General Campbell, He turned to the left and came to Meaday, 60 miles above Prome, which he found totally deserted. Then he turned directly south and reached Prome on May 23, making a circuit of 139 miles. Nowhere did he find any Burmese soldier. Everywhere the inhabitants seemed to be friendly.<sup>1</sup>

In the meanwhile events had been moving rapidly in Lower Burma. On March 3 a British detachment occupied Bassein without any opposition.<sup>2</sup> The Siamese had already begun harassing incursions into Tenasserim.<sup>3</sup> On January 29 some Siamese boats appeared near Mergui. A party of Sepoys being

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 140.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 125(D).

3 "Although no declared war existed between the powers of Ava and Siam, active hostilities had been only suspended for some years past, by the mutual fears and weakness of the parties, and a system of border-inroads had been maintained, by which the countries on the confines of the two states had been almost depopulated. The Siamese ... annually made incursions, especially into the districts of Ye, Tavoi, and Mergui, and carried off the inhabitants, whom they detained in slavery."—Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 68. See Wilson, *Documents*, No. 136(B).

sent to meet them, the Siamese Chief promised to release all the prisoners he had taken. All the prisoners, however, were not released. The Siamese Chief suddenly left Mergui. Early in February the British Commander at Mergui received information that the town of Tenasserim and some small villages had been plundered by the same Siamese Chief, who had also carried off a large number of the inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> Towards the end of March about 1,600 Siamese landed near Tenasserim.<sup>2</sup> It was ascertained that a highly placed Siamese Chief did not believe that Tenasserim was under British protection and ordered his men to carry off every one they could lay hold on. There was a brisk exchange of fire between a Siamese party and British Sepoys.<sup>3</sup> This determined opposition had the desired effect; the Siamese never again ventured to molest the territories under British occupation. "The negotiations also that presently ensued with the court of Bangkok, not only contributed to prevent the repetition of the predatory incursions, but eventually obtained the liberation of almost all the Burman inhabitants who had thus been carried into bondage."<sup>4</sup>

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 132.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 134.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 135(A), 135(B).

4 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 69.

Before leaving Rangoon in February, General Campbell had directed Colonel Smith, British Commander at Martaban, 'to cultivate a good understanding with the Siamese; and to encourage the disaffected Peguers, without entering into the slightest pledge or promise, beyond mere countenance and support ...'.<sup>1</sup> Towards the end of February some deputies from the Siamese army came to see Colonel Smith at Rangoon, where he was waiting to receive them. On their arrival there he started with them for Martaban, where he reached on March 5. The deputies were then furnished with a letter addressed to the Siamese Commander,<sup>2</sup> Ron na Ron, who was a Talaing refugee in Siam. On March 7 another deputation from the Siamese camp came to see Colonel Smith at Martaban, and signified their readiness to assist the British force against the Burmese. Ron na Ron promised through this deputation to see Colonel Smith; but on March 14 a letter<sup>3</sup> was received from him, stating that he had been asked to return to Siam by the King, because the rainy season was at hand and the services of the troops were required for the cultivation of the country. It seems that throughout these

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 123(A).

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 137(B).

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 137(D).

negotiations Ron na Ron was acting in violation of the instructions which he had received from the Siamese King, and was planning to establish himself as a ruling Chief in the province of Pegu with the assistance of the British army and some Talaing Chiefs. The Siamese ministers submitted to the King an exaggerated account of his activities, and thus procured his recall.<sup>1</sup> A few days later Colonel Smith received a friendly letter from the Prime Minister of Siam,<sup>2</sup> who stated that he had allowed the Burmese living in Siam to return to their own country, and intimated that after the rainy season a Siamese army would be sent to assist the British.

In June the Talaing inhabitants of old Pegu rose in rebellion and expelled *Thekia Woongyee*, who commanded the Burmese troops there. At the request of the Talaings 200 Sepoys were sent for their protection. It was expected that the fertile province of Pegu would supply British troops with provisions, elephants and boats.<sup>3</sup>

The news of Maha Bandula's death and the capture of Donabew created a temporary panic in the Burmese Court, but a few enterprising Ministers,

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 137(F).

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 138.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 141(B).



especially the *Pagham Woongyee*, promised to drive the invaders from the country. High bounties, as much as Rs. 170 per man, were paid to induce men to enlist in the army. By the end of June a considerable force assembled at Amarapura. Early in July a British reconnoissance party found about 4,000 men cantoned near a village 84 miles from Prome.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Archibald Campbell knew that it was not the desire of the Government of Bengal to urge them on to extremities. So he sent a private letter to the Prince of Tharawaddy through one of the latter's confidential servants, stating that the British Government was prepared to terminate the war 'whenever the Court of Ava should be inclined to offer reparation for the injuries which had provoked it, and to indemnify the British Government for the expense.' No answer was received.<sup>2</sup> Reports about popular discontent and the peaceful deposition of the King, which later on proved incorrect, led Sir Archibald Campbell to renew his overtures in August.<sup>3</sup> He requested the Burmese Ministers to consider the awful responsibility they owed to both their King and country, and warned them against 'a further perseverance in the war.'

1 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 71.

2 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 71.

3 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 72.

He expressed his desire to conclude peace with any person or persons duly accredited to meet him for that purpose.<sup>1</sup> No response, however, came immediately. The Queen and her brother maintained their ascendancy over the King and the policy of peace found no favour in the Court.<sup>2</sup>

Early in August General Campbell came to know that about 20,000 men, apparently well armed, and with a large proportion of artillery, had come to Meaday and entrenched their position. The whole force in motion, under the command of the King's half brother, Memeaboo, was estimated at not far short of 40,000. It was reported that, besides collecting this army, the Court was making other preparations of considerable magnitude.<sup>3</sup>

On September 6 a Burmese deputation came to General Campbell at Prome<sup>4</sup> and delivered a letter

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 142.

2 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 72.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 143.

It was reported that 20,000 baskets of paddy had been sent to Meaday from the capital, that the King had melted down a number of silver bars in the treasury, that Burmese officers were waiting at Meaday to take charge of Lower Burma as soon as the British were expelled, and that the King had liberally given money to the army from his private treasury.—Wilson, *Documents*, No. 143(A), 143(B).

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 144(A).

from officers of the advance army. They wrote, "Now we well know that the Siamese cannot come. But if it be your wish that our two countries should be on the same terms of amity and friendship as formerly, come and solicit the King's youngest brother, who has received authority over the large Burmese armies, and is fully empowered by the King to treat, and you will receive your answer according to the tenor of your terms."<sup>1</sup> Wilson writes, "This style was not very conciliatory, but being the court language, it was not thought proper to object to it, beyond pointing out its impropriety to the deputies, and explaining to them, that although the English General was willing to meet Burman commanders half-way, he could not condescend to seek them in their entrenchments."<sup>2</sup> General Campbell sent a formal reply<sup>3</sup> to the letter through a complimentary mission of two British officers.<sup>4</sup> They were treated with great respect and kindness; but they had to wait for a few days in the Burmese camp, because the commander could not accept any terms without receiving beforehand the instructions of the King's brother who was at Mellon. Their free intercourse with the Burmese

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 144(B).

2 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 73.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 144(C).

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 144(A).

convinced them that there was no reason to doubt their sincerity.<sup>1</sup> On September 17 they signed an armistice,<sup>2</sup> and returned to Prome on September 19.<sup>3</sup> The armistice provided for the cessation of hostilities for one month, drew a line of demarcation between the two armies, commencing at Comma on the western bank of the Irrawady to Thongo, and arranged that British and Burmese plenipotentiaries would meet at the village of Newbenziek, half-way between the two armies, on October 2 and settle the terms of peace. General Campbell reported that he was not very hopeful about the successful conclusion of these negotiations: "such is the consummate pride and presumption of the people I have to deal with."<sup>4</sup>

On October 2 General Campbell, accompanied by six British officers, met the Burmese envoys at Newbenziek. The Burmese envoys made every effort to be 'civil and obliging.' At their request the armistice was extended for another month (i.e., to November 2 next). This concession General Campbell could easily make, because owing to the continued wetness of the ground he could not move with comfort to

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 145(B), 145(C).

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 145(D).

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 145(A).

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 145(A).

his troops before the middle of November.<sup>1</sup> The envoys required this extension of the period of armistice because they could not accept General Campbell's demands without reference to the capital. They were asked to renounce their claims upon Assam, Manipur and Cachar, to cede the province of Arakan to the East India Company, to pay two crores of rupees as war indemnity,<sup>2</sup> to receive a British Resident at Ava, and to conclude a commercial treaty. In vain did they refer to the serious losses already inflicted by the war upon Burma and appeal to the generosity of the English. General Campbell refused to yield. He offered a dinner to the Burmese envoys, who anxiously waited for news from the capital. There the demands of the invaders were considered extremely humiliating, and it was decided to resume military operations.<sup>3</sup> On October 29 General Campbell received a letter<sup>4</sup> from the Burmese envoys, who complained that the English General had not acted sincerely<sup>5</sup> and said, "However, after the termination of the armistice

1- Wilson, *Documents*, No. 146(A), 146(B).

2 One crore was to be paid immediately, and the Tenasserim province was to be retained by the British until the full payment of the remaining sum.

3 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, pp. 75-76.

Wilson, *Documents*, No. 149(C).

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 149(B).

5 'By command of a Burrasahib, armed sepoy, ships, and

between us, if you shew any inclination to renew your demands for money for your expenses, or any territory from us, you are to consider our friendship at an end."<sup>1</sup>

Information collected from various sources by General Campbell showed that about 49,000 Burmese troops had assembled at various places between Amarapura and Meaday.<sup>2</sup> The whole force was slowly advancing towards the British position at Prome. General Campbell protected the flanks by stationing a detachment under Colonel Pepper at old Pegu<sup>3</sup> and another detachment at Bassein, and tried

boats, passed to Rangoon by way of Modeen (Cape Negrais) and officers with troops, from Megawaddy (Cheduba) crossed over to Sandway, and are in motion. This shews no wish or desire for peace ...."

1 An amusing account of these negotiations is given in *Konbaungset Yazawin*, Vol. II, pp. 403-406. General Campbell is represented as anxious for peace due to his fear of Burmese strength. Snodgrass (*Narrative of the Burmese War*, pp. 214-224) gives full details.

2. Wilson, *Documents*, No. 149(C).

3 Colonel Pepper occupied Shoegeen without opposition on January 3. On January 7 a detachment sent by him tried unsuccessfully to reduce Setaung, a stockade on the eastern bank of the river of that name, which was captured by him on January 11. In February the Burmese made an unsuccessful attempt to dislodge the British from Mikow. Wilson, *Documents*, No. 162(B), 162(C), 163(B). Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, pp. 90-91.

to allure the Burmese to begin a direct attack on Prome.<sup>1</sup>

In November, 1825, a difference of opinion arose between the Commander-in-Chief<sup>2</sup> and the Governor-General about the expediency of advancing upon Amarapura. Lord Combermere argued that it would require more than one campaign to complete a march of 300 miles (from Prome to the capital), for the march from Rangoon to Prome (a distance of 150 miles) had taken more than a year. General Morrison could not advance upon Amarapura through the passes of the Arakan Yoma, for he had reported that it would require the labour of 4,000 men for six weeks 'to open a practicable road into Ava from Arakan.' No co-operation could be expected from the people of Pegu.<sup>3</sup> The Burmese might allow General Campbell to advance without opposition and desert the capital; would not the British army then find itself 'in a situation from which the utmost bravery and determina-

1 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, pp. 76-77.

2 Lord Combermere had already succeeded Sir Edward Paget.

3 Robertson remarks on the relations of the Peguers with the Burmese, "... the lapse of seventy years, and a greatly improved administration on their part, had, by removing invidious distinctions, and placing conquerors and conquered on a footing of equality, done much towards reconciling the latter to their lot."—*Political Incidents of the First Burmese War*, p. 141.

tion may hardly release it'? So Lord Combermere suggested that General Campbell 'should be instructed to make Prome the base of his future operations, endeavouring to bring the enemy to action whenever he can ascertain that a considerable force is within reach of him.'<sup>1</sup> Lord Amherst thought that General Campbell had sufficient troops to protect his flank and rear, that his march to the capital would not occupy so much time as Lord Combermere considered necessary, and that the desertion of the capital by the Burmese would not compel the British army to beat a disastrous retreat. On the other hand, he observed, "the fact of reaching the enemy's capital and compelling the royal family to save themselves by flight must have a most advantageous effect both in the history of the present war and in lessening the probability of wars with Ava in future."<sup>2</sup> So General Campbell was allowed discretion in the matter.

Towards the middle of November General Campbell sent a detachment to dislodge the Burmese from Watty-gaon,<sup>3</sup> about 20 miles from Prome. The attempt proved disastrous.<sup>4</sup> Colonel McDowall

1 S. C., November 11, 1825, No. 17.

2 S. C., November 11, 1825, No. 19.

3 Wethtikan.

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 150, 151(A), 151(B), 151(C), 151(D).



attacked the left flank of the Burmese, but, finding that the strength of the Burmese position and their numerical superiority were too formidable for assault, he retreated. Major Evans attacked the front of the Burmese, but he failed to effect a junction with Colonel McDowall. A 'heavy, well-directed and destructive fire' from the Burmese compelled him to retreat. The troops were exhausted, and, no guide being available, took a wrong road. Colonel Smith, at the head of another regiment, appeared before the Burmese force, but, being unable to join Colonel McDowall, retreated. He reported that he had 'no option left but to retreat or permit himself to be surrounded by an overwhelming force, without hopes of succour or subsistence of any kind.' On the whole, 2 officers (including Colonel McDowall) were killed and 11 officers were wounded.<sup>1</sup>

Encouraged by this success, the Burmese tried to intercept General Campbell's communication with Rangoon. The question of securing the safety of the large and valuable convoys of stores and treasure running in the Irrawady naturally caused the General much anxiety. Colonel Godwin cleared the left bank of the river for 15 miles below Prome. A detachment was stationed at Podoun-Mew with a view to

1 *Konbaungset Yazawin*, Vol. II, pp. 407-408.

command the western bank of the river.<sup>1</sup> Although repeatedly attacked by the Burmese, it succeeded in maintaining its position.<sup>2</sup>

The Burmese were apparently unwilling to leave the cover of the jungle and to offer a direct challenge to their enemies. Their army, about 60,000 strong, was divided into three corps. The left corps, about 15,000 strong, commanded by Maha Nemiow, an old and experienced general deputed from the capital to introduce a new system of conducting the war, was stockaded in the jungles at Simbike and Hyalay, upon the Nawine river. The centre, under the command of the Kee-Woon-ghee,<sup>3</sup> consisting of 30,000 men, was strongly entrenched in an almost inaccessible position on the hills of Napadee. The right, under the orders of Suddoowoon, occupied the west bank of the Irrawady, strongly stockaded, and defended by artillery.<sup>4</sup>

Unwilling any longer to tolerate the annoyance and inconvenience caused by Burmese marauding parties, General Campbell decided to make a general attack upon every accessible part of the Burmese line.

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 152(A).

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 152(B), 152(C), 152(D).

3 Who had conducted the negotiations in September and October.

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 153(A).

On December 1 a combined naval and military attack was made upon Simbike.<sup>1</sup> The attack was led by Colonel Godwin. The Burmese left 300 dead upon the ground (including General Maha Nemiow), with the whole commissariat, and other stores, guns, about 500 muskets and more than 100 Cassay horses. On December 2 a combined naval and military attack was made upon the Burmese centre. Within a short time the Burmese were driven from all their defences in the valley and took shelter in the hills. The hills, covered with strong stockades, could only be ascended by a difficult road. Yet the British troops advanced, and occupied the whole of the formidable position, nearly three miles in extent. The defeat of the Burmese army on the east bank of the Irrawady was complete.<sup>2</sup>

On December 5 Brigadier-General Cotton attacked the Burmese right wing and scored a most complete success. The Burmese left their stockades, which were later on found by British troops to be completely manned and occupied by guns. In this attack also the flotilla co-operated with the army.<sup>3</sup>

After these successes General Campbell marched upon Meaday *via* Watty-gaon. On their way the

1 Simigon.

2 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 153(A).

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 154(B).

troops suffered from a heavy fall of rain, which continued for 30 hours, interfered with the transport and damaged the provisions. An outbreak of cholera followed. On his arrival at Meaday General Campbell found it deserted. He reported, "The country over which the army has marched, bears ample testimony to the panic and dismay in which the enemy has retired; while the numerous dead and dying, lying about the country, afford a melancholy proof of the misery and privations which his troops are suffering. His loss in killed and wounded all the prisoners affirm to have been very great, and desertions to a great extent are daily taking place."<sup>1</sup>

Commodore Sir James Brisbane led the flotilla up the river and arrived off Meaday on December 17. All along the banks Burmese stockades were found deserted. The Commodore wrote to General Campbell, "... it is impossible not to be struck with a degree of admiration at the happy choice of situation of the enemy's positions, aided as they are by the decided natural advantages which the face of the country presents. The extensive and formidable works ... could have been erected only by the manual labour of the masses of men at the command of a barbarous government ... I cannot imagine why the

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 155(A).

enemy should have so hastily relinquished them, unless the recent successes of your force, and the knowledge of your advance, had ... operated on their fears."<sup>1</sup>

While General Campbell was proceeding up from Meaday, the Burmese approached him with an offer to conclude peace. The negotiations, however, were fruitless, and hostilities were resumed, after a short truce, on January 18, 1826. After midnight the British troops hurriedly constructed batteries and brought heavy ordnance from the flotilla. The Burmese also constructed extensive and well-planned works. The cannonade began on January 19. British troops crossed the river and carried Mellon by assault. The Burmese suffered a severe loss. Specie, to the amount of about 30,000 rupees, a large quantity of grain, about 70 horses, together with ordnance, ordnance stores, arms and ammunition, were captured.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated December 18, 1825: Wilson, *Documents*, No. 155(C). Another officer wrote, "As both sides of the river (which in this part is narrow) were thus strongly defended, it would have been impossible for the Flotilla to proceed up until either side had been reduced, had not the enemy, by his flight, thus rendered nugatory one of the very best positions and chain of field defences I have ever seen."—Wilson, *Documents*, No. 155(D).

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, *Documents*, No. 157(B), 157(C). S. C., February 10, 1826, No. 11.

After this success General Campbell marched northwards, 'over very bad roads, but without having occasion to fire a shot.'<sup>1</sup> Early in February he arrived at Pagham-Mew, where the Burmese force, amounting to 16,000 men, had concentrated. The command had been entrusted by the King to a daring chief, Ta-Yea-Soo-gean, who was known as 'King of the Lower Regions.' He seems to have been a good general, for Campbell reported that his plans and disposition of troops exhibited marks of 'considerable judgment.' On February 9 British troops captured Pagham-Mew,<sup>2</sup> but the Burmese displayed unwonted courage and resolution in opposing them. The operations lasted for five hours and continued over four miles of ground. General Campbell attributed the immunity of his troops to the fact that the Burmese lacked "their usual security behind works, whereby they were not only protected, but afforded a rest for their arms, which has often been the cause of considerable loss to us whilst advancing to the attack."<sup>3</sup> The Burmese general fled to the jungles, but was soon arrested and executed.<sup>4</sup>

Many interesting details about the aims and

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 159(A).

2 S. C., March 28, 1826, No. 8.

3 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 160.

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 161.

methods of the Burmese were collected from intercepted documents and the depositions of prisoners. The Burmese generals seem to have kept up a tolerably active system of espionage. It was said that they had sanctioned an attempt to assassinate some officers of the British army. The King had tried to obtain assistance from the Emperor of China, who, however, merely offered to mediate between him and the English and promised an asylum if he were compelled to leave his kingdom. It was also reported that the King had abdicated in favour of his son and fled from the capital.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible for us to assess the truth of these reports.

From Pagham-Mew General Campbell resumed his march towards the capital. On his way he received further overtures for peace. The negotiations<sup>2</sup> culminated in the conclusion of a treaty at Yandabo, a village within four days' march from the capital, where the British army had arrived about the middle of February. The victorious army<sup>3</sup> commenced its return by water on March 5 and came to Rangoon,<sup>4</sup>

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 161.

2 See pp. 313-314.

• 3 Total British loss in Burma (excluding Arakan and Assam): Europeans, 3,222; Indians, 1,766; horses, 399. (Havelock, *Memoirs*, Appendix).

4 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 172.

where no time was lost in embarking such portion of it as was no longer required. A small force continued to occupy Rangoon for some months after the conclusion of peace in accordance with the terms of the treaty. General Campbell paid a brief visit to Calcutta in April and returned to Rangoon.<sup>1</sup>

We have tried to reconstruct a brief account of the military and naval operations of the British forces in Assam and Burma from the official reports submitted by military and naval officers to their superiors. These reports are in no case contradicted by the statements of competent contemporary observers like Snodgrass and Havelock. *Konbaungset Yazawin* enables us to draw a picture, however incomplete and unsatisfactory (only 40 pages being devoted to the war), of the state of things behind the Burmese lines. It may be claimed, therefore, that, on the whole, our sources are fairly exhaustive and accurate. How, then, are we to account for the collapse of Burma? Her stockades were strong, her artillery was not negligible; her soldiers did not lack in personal courage.<sup>2</sup> Probably

1 Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 93.

2 Sir Thomas Munro wrote to the Duke of Wellington, "The armies ... of Ava, are ... a most miserable half-armed rabble, greatly inferior to the peons of any Indian Zemindar. They are the best ditchers and stockaders since the time of the Romans, but as a military body, they are little better than an assemblage of



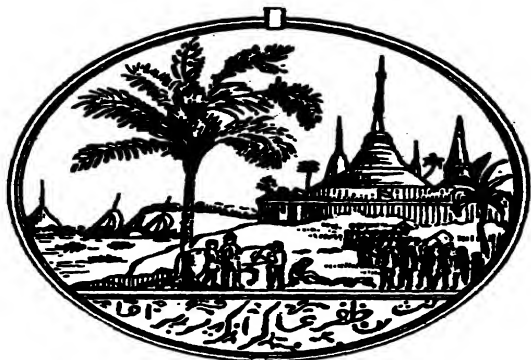
her fundamental weakness lay in bad leadership and lack of co-operation. It was impossible for the average Burmese soldier, dragged by the threat of torture from his plough, ill-equipped, under-fed, deserted by his commanders in the hour of crisis, to save his country from the folly of his rulers and the determined and organised pressure of his powerful enemy.

Lord Amherst was severely criticised by the Directors as well as the British public for his failure to supply General Campbell with provisions and transport necessities.<sup>1</sup> At the conclusion of the war the

badly armed tank-diggers." (Gleig, *Life of Munro*, Vol. II, p. 156). But Robertson, who knew Burma, says: "Contemptible warriors as the Burmese may be, experience has proved that it is only by the very best troops in our service, that they can be promptly driven from such stockaded intrenchments as they can in the course of a day construct; and then not without a loss of life ..." He adds that much of the trouble suffered by Sir Archibald Campbell was due to the prevalent tendency to despise the Burmese as a contemptible enemy. (*Political Incidents of the First Burmese War*, pp. 221-222, 228).

1 In their Secret Letter dated August 3, 1824, the Directors observed that the lack of bullocks in General Campbell's army was a "matter of censure either on the Supreme Government or on the Commander of the expedition, if not on both of them."

A European soldier who took part in the war charges Lord Amherst's Government of neglect '... to the spiritual wants of the British troops, while on service in the field.' During the war, he says, "there was no such person as a chaplain attached to the troops," nor was there any provision for the performance of divine



## THE AVA MEDAL

*Presented to the troops engaged  
in the Burmese War*

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14

Court of Directors offered its unanimous thanks to Sir Thomas Munro, Sir Archibald Campbell, Commodore Brisbane and the military and naval officers who took part in the operations, but it could not reach unanimity when the proposal of offering its thanks to the Governor-General was passed.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, at one stage of the war the authorities in London seriously entertained thoughts of recalling him.<sup>2</sup> There is no doubt that the Supreme Government committed mistakes and protracted the duration of the war by their failure to send regular shipments of provisions<sup>3</sup> and carriage cattle. Sir Thomas Munro stated the position very fairly when he wrote to the Duke of Wellington, "There has been no want of energy or decision at any time in attacking the enemy; but there has certainly been a great want of many of the arrangements and combinations by which the movements of an army are facilitated, and its success rendered more certain. There were no doubt great difficulties; every-

service. In his own corps the Sabbath was observed by officers commanding companies reading the Articles of War to their men. (*Historical Record of the First European Regiment*, pp. 511-512).

1 Political Department Notification, May 14, 1827.

2 Gleig, *Life of Munro*, Vol. II, pp. 174-175.

3 Sir Thomas Munro wrote that "one of the most serious obstacles to the prosecution of military operations from Rangoon, is the want of both salt and fresh provisions for Europeans." (Gleig, *Life of Munro*, Vol. II, p. 384).

thing was new; the country was difficult, and the climate was destructive; but still, more enterprise in exploring the routes and passes on some occasions, and more foresight on others in ascertaining in time the means of conveyance and subsistence, and what was practicable, and what was not, would have saved much time."<sup>1</sup> On another occasion he wrote, "... great injustice is done to him (i.e., Lord Amherst) in the idle clamour which has been raised against him. His situation was a very arduous one. He was new to India;<sup>2</sup> the Burmese were an enemy entirely unknown to us; we were ignorant of their military force—of their mode of warfare—of their resources, and of the face of their country."<sup>3</sup> These views of a compe-

1 Letter dated April 16, 1826. (Gleig, *Life of Munro*, Vol. II, p. 160).

2 At the very beginning of the war Lord Amherst frankly wrote to Sir Thomas Munro, "Arrangements like these are far beyond the reach of my experience." (Gleig, *Life of Munro*, Vol. II, p. 100). In a letter to the Court of Directors (December 23, 1825) the Supreme Government observed that the want of fresh meat, which aggravated the sickness of European troops originally caused by an unforeseen outbreak of epidemic fever, was due entirely to the desertion of Rangoon by local inhabitants, 'an event which could not have been anticipated.'

3 Gleig, *Life of Munro*, Vol. II, p. 175. Wilson, *Documents*, No. 242-243. See also Secret Letter to Court, March 18, 1826, Para 48.

tent observer, frankly expressed in the privacy of non-official correspondence, constitute the most plausible justification of Lord Amherst's management of the war.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE ANGLO-BURMESE TREATIES OF 1826

A few days before the declaration of war Lord Amherst defined his war aims in an elaborate minute.<sup>1</sup> The fundamental principle to be observed in determining 'the terms which should be imposed on the Burman monarch' was defined in the following words: " ... as any active and successful hostilities in which we may engage with that proud, arrogant and irascible people, will necessarily make them for ever our fixed and deadly enemies, every maxim of sound policy suggests that, when once this Government has embarked in measures for coercing them, it should require such concessions as must materially circumscribe their means of doing future injury to the British power." In pursuance of this principle the Governor-General decided that 'the entire evacuation and the formal renunciation of all right and dominion in the conquered countries<sup>2</sup> of Assam,

1. S. C., February 20, 1824, No. 1.

2. Apparently Lord Amherst was not prepared to force Burma to give up territories which were her integral portions. He wrote to Sir Thomas Munro on April 2, 1824, "I am not at all sure that the dismemberment of the Burmese empire, even if we had the means of effecting it, is an event to be desired. The

Cassay (including Manipur) and perhaps Arakan, with their dependencies' should be 'insisted on as indispensable conditions' of peace. But these countries were not to be annexed to the British Empire; they were to be 'placed in the situation of dependent and protected states, subject to the payment of such tribute only as might suffice to cover the expense incurred by their protection.' Such a policy, Lord Amherst believed, would 'afford security to our Eastern frontier.' It would at the same time prove the generosity of the Company; the liberation of the peoples of Assam and Arakan from 'the tyranny of Burman despotism' was 'not unworthy the attention of a great and generous Government.' With regard to Manipur, Lord Amherst suspected that, owing to the long and intimate relations of the Burmese Kings with that principality, the extension of British influence there would be viewed with 'jealousy and alarm' by the Court of Ava. So he decided to

balance is now tolerably equal between them and the Siamese, and they help to keep each other in check." Sir Thomas Munro replied, "... such kingdoms as these (i.e., Burma and Siam) are in a perpetual state of fluctuation, and can never, for any long period, remain, like the old governments of Europe, within the same limits. Our best policy is not to look so much to the preservation of any balance between them, as to the weakening of that power which is most able to disturb our frontier." (Gleig, *Life of Munro*, Vol. II, pp. 110, 115-116).



settle the question of extending British protection to that hill state upon receiving a detailed report from the man on the spot, David Scott. With regard to Arakan, the Governor-General refused to accept the recommendation of Captain Canning for the annexation of that province to the British Empire. He believed that the *Mags* 'cherished the deepest resentment against their oppressors, as well as the most ardent desire to recover their long lost patrimony.'

These preliminary observations of the Governor-General naturally lost their force under the pressure of the war, and we shall be sadly disappointed if we look for the germs of the treaty of Yandabo in the minute of February 20, 1824. Scott had already suggested the necessity of retaining possession of Assam after the expulsion of the Burmese.<sup>1</sup> On March 4, 1824, Captain Canning suggested that one of the principal conditions of peace should be the payment of the expenses of the war.<sup>2</sup> When he was sent to Rangoon as the Governor-General's Political Agent and Joint Commissioner for executing on the part of the British Government any treaty that may be negotiated with the Burmese,' he was instructed to ascertain whether the King of Burma would be able to pay a large war indemnity, to demand 'the removal

1 S. C., February 13, 1824, No. 15.

2 S. C., March 12, 1824, No. 4.

and public disgrace of the four Rajas of Arakan whose language and conduct have invariably been so disrespectful and violent towards the British Government,' to ask for 'the restoration of all property of British subjects plundered or confiscated during the war,' to require 'the exemption of all British vessels frequenting Rangoon and other ports of the Burman Empire from certain degrading and vexatious port regulations to which they are now subject,' and, lastly, to secure 'permission for the permanent residence of a Political Agent and Consul at Rangoon with a fortified dwelling-house and a guard for personal security.'<sup>1</sup> He was informed, however, that the last two conditions should not be insisted on 'if received with any particular display of jealousy and alarm.'<sup>2</sup> To these new demands was soon added a claim for 'the safety and indemnity of the Manipurians.' Scott's report had convinced the Governor-General of 'the importance to British interests of establishing the independence' of Manipur. At the same time Gambhir Singh was informed that his only chance of regaining his ancestral throne lay in 'the degree of active assistance and co-operation' offered by him to the British Government.<sup>3</sup>

1 S. C., March 26, 1824, No. 17.

2 S. C., March 26, 1824, No. 17.

3 S. C., April 20, 1824, No. 9, 14.

In April, 1824, Robertson, Magistrate of Chittagong, reported to the Government that, in his opinion, 'the separation of Arakan from the Burmese dominions' was 'a most desirable event.' "The retention of that province by the Burmese," he observed, "will leave them the means of gratifying at some future period their desire of injuring us by all those petty modes of annoyance which, though not serious enough to be publicly resented by again having recourse to arms, may still, as heretofore, be more than the ordinary police can prevent." The restoration of the Province to the *Mags* he considered as unwise, for they were likely to prove 'troublesome' neighbours. Moreover, they could not be expected to form 'a Government of sufficient strength and stability to stand unsupported.' There were two parties led by two claimants to the throne of Arakan—a minor son of Kingbering and a man named Hynja, a descendant of a former usurper. Under the circumstances, Arakan could flourish best under British rule. Arakan was likely to attract many Bengali settlers: "the soil is so favourable to the growth of rice that, were the Bengalees relieved from their dread of the Burmese, half the land now covered with jungles would in a few years be rendered productive."<sup>1</sup>

1 S. C., April 30, 1824, No. 30.

Soon after the capture of Rangoon Captain Canning wrote a letter to the Burmese Ministers, stating distinctly the terms on which the Governor-General was prepared to conclude peace.<sup>1</sup> He demanded the evacuation of Assam, Cachar and Jaintia, the relinquishment of all claim to the island of Shahpuri and the principality of Manipur, the acceptance of such boundary between Chittagong and Arakan as the British Government might determine, the payment of the cost of war, the dismissal and public disgrace of the four Rajas of Arakan whose language and conduct towards the British Government were disrespectful, the release of all British subjects confined during the war, the restoration of all British property, plundered or confiscated during the war, the exemption of all British ships from degrading and vexatious regulations at Burmese ports, and the establishment of a permanent British Political Agent and Consul at Rangoon with a fortified dwelling and guard for personal security.<sup>2</sup> No reply seems to have been received at the British camp. Probably the victory of Ramu<sup>3</sup> and the interpretation put by the Burmese upon the British successes in Rangoon<sup>4</sup>

1. S. C., June 18, 1824, No. 4.

2. Foreign Miscellaneous, No. 179.

3. See pp. 256-261.

4. See p. 276.

encouraged them to reject this offer. But the successive defeats suffered by the Burmese during the first few months of the war led them to make an abortive attempt for opening negotiations in January, 1825.<sup>1</sup>

In July, 1825, the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Edward Paget, observed, " ... as we have sufficient grounds to come to the conclusion that no disasters, however severe, will influence this infatuated court to commence a negotiation for peace, however much they may be anxious to obtain it, it becomes necessary to consider whether we can, consistently with our own honour, be the first to make pacific overtures."<sup>2</sup> Lord Amherst, tired of successful skirmishes which seemed only to prolong the war,<sup>3</sup> approved this policy.<sup>4</sup> Robertson, who had so long been managing

1 See p. 301-302.

2 S. C., July 22, 1825, No. 2.

3 The Commander-in-Chief observed, "When I consider the enormous expenditure of treasure ... and ... the great sacrifice of British blood, when I contemplate the obstacles and difficulties which ... still present themselves to our views ...; when I bear in mind the extraordinary hardships and deprivations to which our troops have been already subjected and which they must still be prepared to encounter; when, above all, I recollect the insalubrity of the climate ....., I cannot disguise my anxiety that, consistently with our honour, this contest may be brought to the speediest conclusion." (S. C., July 22, 1825, No. 2).

4 S. C., July 22, 1825, No. 3.

civil affairs in Arakan,<sup>1</sup> was sent to Rangoon as Civil Commissioner for Pegu.<sup>2</sup> He was also 'joined with Sir Archibald Campbell in a Commission for conducting any future negotiation.' This step was not to be interpreted as an indication of the Governor-General's loss of confidence in Sir Archibald Campbell.<sup>3</sup> The General remained the Senior Member of the Commission. He was to have decisive voice in all cases of a political nature. If Robertson differed on any point he was merely entitled to record the grounds of his dissent. All matters of a purely civil nature were left to Robertson, but General Campbell was authorised to record his opinion on any case. Thus, as Robertson says, Sir Archibald Campbell had "nothing but a moral restraint imposed upon him."<sup>4</sup> These arrangements, however, did not bring the war

1 For a description of his work there, see his *Political Incidents of the First Burmese War*.

2 Lord Amherst observed, "The chief thing to guard against in his administration of the judicial and revenue concerns of the country is the giving an impression to the inhabitants that they are about to form permanently a part of our Empire. The laws at present in existence should continue to be administered save when they violate the first principles of justice and humanity and the revenue should be collected as nearly as possible in the mode in which the people have been accustomed to pay it." (S. C., July 22, 1825, No. 3).

3 S. C., July 22, 1825, No. 3, 6.

4 Robertson, *Political Incidents of the First Burmese War*,

to an end. Even after Maha Bandula's death the Burmese did not betray any sign of psychological weakness. The negotiations of October, 1825, proved abortive.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the close of the year 1825 two factors turned the scale in favour of peace in the Court of Ava. The *Rājaguru* (spiritual preceptor of the King), who had been travelling in India 'ostensibly for purposes of devotion', had been confined by the British authorities after the outbreak of war. He was released after the arrival of General Campbell's army at Meaday and "furnished with a private note, expressive of the undiminished readiness of the British officers to grant peace ... upon liberal conditions, which it was expected he would communicate to his master."<sup>2</sup> This communication was received in a favourable atmosphere, for the advance of the British army towards the capital seems to have weakened the Queen's party.<sup>4</sup>

While General Campbell was proceeding up from Meaday, a Burmese messenger came to him under a flag of truce and said that Kolein Menghie

pp. 143-144. Later on John Crawford was sent to join the Commission as third Member.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 323-325.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 212.

had arrived at Mellon, deputed by the King, to conclude a treaty of peace. Two British officers were sent to the Burmese camp. The Burmese envoys wanted a truce for 25 days, but nothing beyond 24 hours was agreed to. General Campbell reached Mellon on December 29. The place was strongly occupied and the river covered with boats. The Burmese unsuccessfully tried to escape with the boats. They allowed Commodore Brisbane to pass their stockades unmolested. This forbearance to the flotilla was accepted by General Campbell as a proof of their sincerity and desire for peace. Negotiations, therefore, began.<sup>1</sup> The British point of view was represented by General Campbell, Robertson and Commodore Brisbane.

Kolein Menghie, the senior Burmese Commissioner, declared that he was authorised by the King 'to settle the business' by doing what he thought best for the interests of the country. "Whatever I do," he said, "my acts are as the acts of the King." He was then told that the British Government insisted on the acceptance of the terms proposed in October last (i.e., the cession of Aracan, Assam and Manipur and the payment of two crores of rupees as indemnity)

<sup>1</sup> The details of the negotiations are collected from S. C., January 6, 1826, No. 43.



with one addition—the cession of Ye, Tavoy and Mergui.

Robertson says that the Burmese envoys ‘prayed, in almost abject terms’<sup>1</sup> for the withdrawal of the demand for indemnity.<sup>2</sup> They said, “In war the expenses are not all upon one side. We also have expended a great quantity of money. It has never been our custom in war to ask for the reimbursement of expenses, nor to pay them to others.” Robertson coldly replied, “In cases like the present, where customs differ, the custom of the conquerors is acted upon.” They were also told that if they refused to conclude peace at once, the war would be prolonged and the amount of expenses (and therefore, of the indemnity) would be heavier. The Burmese envoys said that they were ashamed to confess that their treasury was quite empty. Koleh Menghie said, “You are mistaken in supposing us to be wealthy. If there were money in the treasury at present, the King would not consent to make peace. The country is ruined. The people have all fled from their homes,

1 Koleh Menghie said, “The English are very generous, the Burmese extremely poor. The Burmese beg, as a national boon, that the demand may be lessened, and they will account such a favour as an act of charity done to them.”

2 See *Political Incidents of the First Burmese War*, pp. 167-184.

and there is no cultivation." Sir Archibald Campbell thereupon reduced his demand to one crore. After further entreaties for mercy Kolein Menghie agreed to pay this amount in instalments, but added, "The payment of the money falls very heavy upon us."

With regard to the question of territories, Kolein Menghie made no objection to give up Assam and Manipur, although he declared that Gambhir Singh should not be recognised as the ruler of the latter Kingdom. Ye, Tavoy and Mergui he agreed to surrender with mild protests, but he put up a stubborn fight for Arakan. Robertson said, "We must keep Arakan. If it be returned to you, no care that our judges or your Governors can take will prevent eternal quarrels upon the frontier. We must have the mountains as a barrier between us and you to prevent the possibility of the recurrence of war." He added, "The question is not how much you will cede to us, but how much we shall return to you." Even a soldier could not be more blunt. Kolein Menghie had no alternative but to agree. The points of contention being thus settled, there was no difficulty about minor points—the grant of amnesty to those inhabitants of Pegu who had helped the British during the war, the interchange of Residents and the inclusion of Siam as a party to the treaty.<sup>1</sup> A draft treaty

1 Although the Siamese had taken no part in the war, they

was signed on January 3, 1826, and an armistice was agreed upon till January 18, by which date it was expected that the ratification of the King would be available.

Sir Archibald Campbell and his colleagues thought it necessary to explain to the Supreme Government the reasons for reducing the amount of the indemnity. The Burmese had accepted all the terms—including the cession of valuable provinces—imposed upon them. They had pleaded their inability to continue their military demonstrations and from time to time announced their desire to help the British force. An envoy, Captain Burney, was sent from Calcutta to congratulate the King of Siam on his accession. He was instructed to 'cultivate a good understanding with Siam,' to 'afford the fullest information on every point connected with the Burma war,' to 'hold out no distinct expectation of our ceding to the Siamese any portion of our acquisitions on the coast of Tenasserim, to express no eagerness for Siamese co-operation against Burma, and 'to effect the desired improvement in our commercial relations with Siam.' (S. C., May 13, 1825, No. 24). He reached Bangkok on December 4, 1825, and concluded a treaty of friendly and commercial intercourse. "The court of Siam would have been well pleased to have recovered the Tenasserim provinces, which had been wrested from them by the Burman arms, but they hesitated to render the services (i.e., military assistance) that might have entitled them to some compensation, not only in the uncertainty of the return they might expect, but in mistrust of their own army, composed as that was, in a great degree, of Peguers and commanded by a General of Pegu extraction." (Wilson, *Historical Sketch*, p. 84. See also Wilson, *Documents*, Appendix, No. 30, 32, 33, 34).

lity to pay. Under these circumstances it was neither politic nor generous to insist upon the payment of two crores. Moreover, if the Burmese decided to prefer the continuation of the war to the payment of so large a sum, the British Government would once more find itself exposed to ruinous expenses.<sup>1</sup>

Lord Amherst had decided that the King of Burma should be asked to agree not to allow any American or any subject of any European Power except England to settle or to trade in his dominions. Sir Archibald Campbell and his colleagues did not propose this condition to Kolein Menghie. Such a condition, they thought, would betray unnecessary anxiety on the part of the British Government and encourage the Burmese King to expect support and assistance from other Powers. Moreover, "such a clause might possibly give umbrage to the Governments of many nations now at peace with Great Britain." There were some European merchants in Burma; they—and their Governments—would certainly resent their exclusion from 'a fair participation in all the commercial advantages which a free and unrestricted intercourse would afford.'<sup>2</sup>

Indications were, however soon available to show

1 S. C., January 6, 1826, No. 43.

2 S. C., January 6, 1826, No. 43.

that the King would not ratify the treaty. On January 6 General Campbell received letters from two Englishmen who had been living at Ava as prisoners. They wrote that the King would never consent to the dismemberment of his territory. These letters were obviously written under dictation. On January 17 some Burmese envoys appeared at the British camp, apologised for the non-arrival of the ratification, and requested the British force to retreat to Prome or at least to extend the truce. On January 18, the day originally fixed for the return of the ratified treaty, the Burmese envoys solicited a further delay of six or seven days. General Campbell declared that their request could not be complied with and asked them to evacuate the fortified and entrenched city of Mellon by sun-rise on January 20. On their positive rejection of this demand, they were told that hostilities would be resumed after twelve o'clock that very night (January 18).<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to say why the Burmese Government refused to ratify the treaty. Snodgrass<sup>2</sup> suggests two alternatives: either the envoys exceeded their power, or the fickle King changed his mind. At one of his interviews with Sir Archibald Campbell Kolehing Menghie had betrayed his fear of provoking

1 Wilson, *Documents*, No. 157(B).

2 *Narrative of the Burmese War*, p. 271.

the King's wrath. With regard to the clause concerning the indemnity, he said, "That term of the treaty we must ourselves execute, for we dare not communicate it to the King. We must pay the money ourselves, for should the King hear of such a stipulation, he would probably put us to death. Of that we must take our chance."<sup>1</sup>

A few days after the resumption of hostilities the Burmese Government released two white prisoners—an American missionary named Price and an English surgeon named Sandford—and sent them as envoys to the British camp. They were told that the terms previously offered were still open to the Burmese King, that the British army would retire to Rangoon<sup>2</sup> upon the payment of 25 *lakhs* of rupees, that Burmese territory would be completely evacuated upon the payment of another instalment of similar amount, and that the remaining amount of 50 *lakhs* should be paid in equal annual instalments in two years.<sup>3</sup> The King and his ministers heard with 'as much satisfaction as astonishment' that the terms were not more

1 S. C., February 10, 1826, No. 14.

2 *Konbaungset Yazawin* (Vol. II, pp. 412-413) informs us that the British officers were afraid because the country was unknown to them; they thought that further advance would be unsafe, and proposed peace.

3 S. C., March 10, 1826, No. 6.

severe than those offered before. Price and Sandford returned to the British camp on February 13. The only objection raised by the Burmese Court related to money payment,<sup>1</sup> but General Campbell refused to reduce the amount. Price once more went to Ava. The army advanced to Yandabo, within four days' march from the capital. There Price came, with Burmese envoys authorised by the King to conclude a treaty embodying all British demands. The treaty<sup>2</sup> was signed on February 24. A sum of 25 *lakhs* of rupees was paid at once in gold and silver bullion. Three British officers (Captain Lumsden, Lieutenant Havelock and Dr. Knox) paid a ceremonial visit to the King<sup>3</sup> on March 1.

For various reasons Lord Amherst had decided not to demand the cession of Pegu. He did not like to undertake the responsibility of defending the province against Burmese aggression.<sup>4</sup> Direct annexation

1 This seems to have been due to financial difficulties. At the concluding stages of the war the Burmese Government had to hire soldiers at the rate of Rs. 170 per man; Rs. 60 or 70 was the standard rate at the beginning of the war. An eye-witness speaks of 'the impoverished state of both public and private funds' in the capital.—Wilson, *Documents*, No. 173(A).

2 Text in Appendix B.

3 Havelock, *Memoirs*, pp. 338-366, Appendix.

4 Robertson says, "Pegu once incorporated into our possessions, a trespass upon its integrity must be resented as promptly

was, therefore, out of the question. Nor was it possible to leave the Talaings independent. As Wilson observes, "The people were very much mixed with the Burman race, and their characters indicated neither personal intrepidity, nor national spirit, which could have been relied upon as available in undertaking their defence; neither did it appear that any individual of rank or influence existed, round whom the population would have rallied, as the common object of their reverence or attachment."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, although the King had reluctantly agreed to the cession of Arakan, 'no coercion' could have induced him to give up Pegu; "therefore that province was to be taken without as that infringement of our Bengal frontier out of which the war in progress had arisen. The possession of Pegu was likely to lead to a speedy renewal of war with Ava, and an eventual rupture with Siam, a state little likely to prefer us as neighbours to its co-religionists, the Burmese." (*Political Incidents of the First Burmese War*, p. 141). Sir Thomas Munro favoured the restoration of Talaing rule in Pegu, with Tenasserim attached to it. He wrote, "I would have left a corps of about six thousand men in the country until their government and military force were properly organised; five or six years would have been fully sufficient ... and we could then have gradually withdrawn the whole of our force ... Pegu is so fertile, and has so many natural advantages, that it would in a few years have been a more powerful state than Ava." (Gleig, *Life of Munro*, Vol. II, p. 160).

1 *Historical Sketch*, pp. 84-85. Ron na Ron, the Siamese general who hoped to place himself at the head of an independent Pegu, was the descendant of a former headman of Martaban.



treaty, and to be held by sheer force."<sup>1</sup> It is also probable that casual English observers exaggerated the hatred of the Talaings against their Burmese rulers. Robertson, an experienced and competent officer who came into close contact with both the peoples, says that "the lapse of seventy years, and a greatly improved administration on their (i.e., the Burmese) part, had, by removing invidious distinctions, and placing conquerors and conquered on a footing of equality, done much towards reconciling the latter to their lot."<sup>2</sup>

"The cession of Arakan," says Snodgrass, "amply provides for the freedom from Burmese interference with our Indian territories on that side."<sup>3</sup> The Arakan Yoma Mountains were recognised as the boundary between British India and Burma, and it was provided that any doubt regarding the boundary was to be settled by Commissioners appointed by the British and Burmese Governments for that purpose.<sup>4</sup>

We have already referred to Lord Amherst's un-

1 Robertson, *Political Incidents of the Burmese War*, p. 142. When Lord Dalhousie annexed Pegu after the Second Burmese War, King Mindon did not sign a treaty; the annexation was effected by Proclamation.

2 *Political Incidents of the First Burmese War*, p. 141.

3 *Narrative of the Burmese War*, p. 297.

4 Treaty of Yandabo, Article 3.

willingness to annex Arakan. Even in January, 1825, Robertson was informed that the independence of Arakan was to be regarded as one of the most important conditions of peace. "Indeed," observed the Secretary to the Government, "so desirable does the Governor-General in Council consider any arrangement with the Burmese which would secure to us the intervention of a friendly nation on the Chittagong side and thereby complete the removal of the Burmese from the whole line of our eastern frontier, that to ensure a more ready acquiescence on the part of Ava, His Lordship in Council would be willing to waive the demand for the reimbursement of our expenses ..."<sup>1</sup> After the capture of the city of Arakan Robertson was appointed to control 'the entire civil government of the province.' He was instructed 'to undertake the most effectual measures for organizing a Police, calling forth the local resources, and establishing such a degree of order, tranquillity and confidence, as will give to the force in advance the advantage of a peaceable and well-disposed population and country in its rear.'<sup>2</sup> A few months later, in May, 1825, Lord Amherst suggested that the annexation of Arakan<sup>3</sup> was necessary 'as in-

1 S. C., January 14, 1825, No. 14.

2 S. C., February 18, 1825, No. 12.

3 Even at this stage he did not preclude the possibility of establishing an independent *Mag* government.

fllicting a severe but well-merited loss on our enemy and as materially contributing to our own future security.' He thought that the mere cession of Assam would not be regarded by 'European or native spectators' as 'an equivalent for the sacrifices and efforts' of the British Government, and the Burmese would not be 'deterred from future aggression when they found so little atonement required for past injury and insult.' Finally, he observed that "a country possessing a comparatively robust and hardy population will be much more desirable as a frontier territory than the fertile and unwarlike province of Bengal."<sup>1</sup> The annexation of Arakan was, therefore, decided upon, and arrangements were made for the administration of the province.

After Robertson's appointment as Civil Commissioner for Pegu, Paton succeeded him as the controller of civil affairs in Arakan. A few months after the treaty of Yandabo he submitted to the Government a detailed report<sup>2</sup> about 'the character of the country, its extent, history, population, productions, and the manners and customs of the inhabitants.' Of the four provinces of Arakan,<sup>3</sup> Arakan proper (exclud-

1 S. C., May 20, 1825, No. 6.

2 S. C., June 9, 1826, No. 10. Some of the details given in this report are also found in Robertson's report dated July 21, 1825. (S. C., August 26, 1825, No. 41).

3 Arakan, Ramree, Cheduba, Sandway.

ing the capital) consisted of 55 districts, each of which contained 'according to its size from 2 to 60 *paras* or small villages.' The city of Arakan was divided into eight wards. The province of Ramree was divided into 25 districts, and the province of Sandway into 17 districts. The island of Cheduba formed a single district and consisted of 10 *paras*. The Governor of Arakan (who controlled these four provinces) used to send to the King an annual tribute of Rs. 18,663; the remainder of the revenue became his 'sole perquisite.' The population of the four provinces did not exceed 100,000 (*Mags*—60,000; *Muslims*—30,000; *Burmese*—10,000). Limestone was available in abundance in the islands. Gold and silver dust were found in the *nullahs* (small canals) near Bassein. The soil of Cheduba was well-adapted for the cultivation of cotton. The only land assessed for revenue was that on which sugar cane, hemp, indigo, onions, garlic and turmeric were grown. "The annual tax upon a piece of land 150 feet square sown with sugar cane or indigo was two rupees, and one rupee for hemp on the same measurement. Onions, garlic and turmeric on a slip of ground 150 feet long and 3 feet wide paid eight annas." Every plough drawn by buffaloes was assessed at a uniform rate throughout the province. Fees of varying rates were levied on fishing. The total annual revenue derived from fishing amounted to

Rs. 2,000. Timber was found in the hills, but the cost of bringing it down to the plains was prohibitive. "The cultivation of rice," Paton observed, "may be carried on to any extent, and, as the population increases, will be extended and tend not only to render the climate and country more healthy, but by becoming an article of great trade, will increase the revenue considerably." This prophecy has been fulfilled: Akyab is now one of the most important rice-exporting ports in the world.

In 1826, however, Arakan was not regarded as a profitable acquisition from the financial point of view. Robertson (who became the Governor-General's Agent for the South-Eastern Frontier after the treaty of Yandabo) observed, "As a source of revenue Arakan has never been contemplated as a useful possession, all the advantages anticipated from its annexation to our empire being comprised in the exclusion of the Burmese from a province where the local peculiarities enabled them to disturb the tranquillity of the contiguous country ..."<sup>1</sup>

The annexation of Tenasserim<sup>2</sup> ultimately proved

<sup>1</sup> S. C., June 9, 1826, No. 12.

<sup>2</sup> On September 4, 1824, Lord Amherst wrote Sir Thomas Munro: Mergui and Tavoy "are remote acquisitions, but they would be powerful cards to play in any dealings which we may eventually have with the Siamese." (Gleig, *Life of Munro*, Vol. II, p. 135).

to be an unprofitable speculation. Every year the Supreme Government had to bear an expense of over 1½ *lakhs* of rupees for this province, and this charge was expected to increase since buildings, barracks, fortifications, etc. were required. In 1826 the Court of Directors suggested the retrocession of the province to Burma, but the measure was not insisted upon, on the expectation<sup>1</sup> that a large number of Burmese subjects would migrate to the ceded provinces. This migration was considerable at first, amounting to about 12,000 persons, but later no more arrived, and some of the original emigrants returned to Burmese territory. In 1828 the Court of Directors repeated that suggestion and Lord Ellenborough, President of the Board of Control, drew up an elaborate memorandum (November 25, 1828) in which he observed "that the Tenasserim provinces are an undesirable possession and regret may be expressed that we insisted upon their cession." Early in 1830 Major Henry Burney was sent to Ava as Resident (under Article 7 of the Treaty of Yandabo) by Lord William Bentinck. He was instructed to find out whether the King was willing to give 'some equivalent ... in exchange for a portion or whole of the Tenasserim provinces.' After protracted negotiations Burney found that the Bur-

1 This expectation was due to the British authorities' belief in the superiority of their own administration to 'Burman tyranny.'

mese ministers were not prepared to give any 'equivalent'—neither money nor territory. He reported, "The circumstance, which is well known here, of our annually sending lacs of rupees to defray the ordinary expenses of places from which under the Burmese the King was accustomed to realize some surplus revenue, leads all parties here to rest perfectly satisfied that sooner or later, we must restore these provinces to Ava, and that the exercise of a little patience is all that is required on the part of the Ministers of this country to promote the attainment of their wishes." Under these circumstances Lord William Bentinck had no other alternative but to tolerate the recurring losses. In March, 1833, orders arrived from the Court of Directors authorising the Government of India to retain the Tenasserim province permanently.<sup>1</sup>

Major Burney had to deal with a dispute regarding the boundary of the province of Tenasserim. The treaty of Yandabo<sup>2</sup> recognised the river Salween as the boundary between British and Burmese territory; but the district of Martaban remained in Burmese possession. In October, 1831, Burmese ministers claimed that Moulmein and some other places *east* of

<sup>1</sup> Desai, *History of the British Residency in Burma*, pp. 56-58, 60, 130-137, 141.

<sup>2</sup> Article 4.

the Salween should be returned to the King because although they lay on the British side of the Salween, they formed parts of the district of Martaban. When Burney refused to admit this claim, the Burmese argued that the matter should be decided by a joint boundary commission in accordance with Articles 3 and 4 of the treaty of Yandabo. Burney bluntly refused to discuss the question. The claim was repeated by the Burmese envoys sent to Calcutta in December, 1830. The Supreme Government gave a positive refusal.<sup>1</sup>

In April, 1825, Scott and Colonel Richards were appointed 'Commissioners for the provisional administration of the affairs of Assam.'<sup>2</sup> By the treaty of Yandabo<sup>3</sup> the King of Burma renounced all claims upon Assam and agreed to abstain from all future interference with that country 'and its dependencies.' Lord Amherst was not willing to annex the entire province, but he found it difficult to select an Ahom prince who might be recognised as vassal ruler. As Gait observes, "Not only had the Burmese been in possession for several years, in the course of which they had overthrown most of the old administrative land-

<sup>1</sup> Desai, *History of the British Residency in Burma*, pp. 137-141, 158-159.

<sup>2</sup> S. C., April 5, 1825, No. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Article 2.



marks, but the people were split up into many conflicting parties, and the elevation of any particular pretender to the throne would have resulted, as soon as the British troops were withdrawn, in a renewal of the fatal dissensions and civil wars which had prevailed for so many years before the Burmese occupation."<sup>1</sup> Assam was, therefore, divided into three parts. Matak,<sup>2</sup> the country of the Moamarias, was left under the rule of their chief, styled the Bar Senapati, who acknowledged the supremacy of the British Government and agreed to supply 300 soldiers in time of war.<sup>3</sup> Sadiya was placed under the rule of a Khampti Chief, who acknowledged British supremacy.<sup>4</sup> The rest of Assam was placed under the charge of British officers. Scott remained the principal officer-in-charge; in 1827 Captain White was

1 *History of Assam*, p. 285.

2 Modern Lakhimpur district.

3 Agreement dated May 13, 1826. (Aitchison, *Treaties*, etc., Vol. II, pp. 137-138). In January, 1835, the obligation to supply troops was commuted to a money payment of Rs. 1,800 a year. The Bar Senapati died in November, 1839, and, as his successor refused the terms offered him, the district was annexed by the Company. (Aitchison, *Treaties*, etc., Vol. II, pp. 131, 138-139).

4 Aitchison, *Treaties*, etc., Vol. II, pp. 131-132. The Khamptis revolted in 1839. Sadiya was annexed after the suppression of the revolt in 1842.

appointed to assist him in Lower Assam, and in 1828 Captain Neufville was appointed to assist him in Upper Assam.<sup>1</sup>

The question of restoring the Brahmaputra valley to Ahom rule continued to engage the attention of the Supreme Government. "It was admitted on all hands that it would not be right to withdraw the British troops altogether, as this would be certain to lead to the revival of the internecine disturbances which had previously brought the country to the verge of ruin, but, on the other hand, it was not desired to resort to permanent annexation, if any other alternative could be found. It was, therefore, decided to follow a middle course, i.e., to instal a native ruler in one part of the province, and to retain the other part as a means of providing the revenue required for the maintenance of an adequate British garrison."<sup>2</sup> Scott and his successor, Robertson, recommended the restoration of Purandar Singh.<sup>3</sup> In 1833 the whole of

1 Aitchison, *Treaties*, etc., Vol. II, p. 131. For a description of British administration in the Brahmaputra valley, see Gait, *History of Assam*, pp. 288-290, and S. C., July 7, 1826, No. 31. Scott died in August, 1831, and was succeeded by Robertson.

2 Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 291.

3 S. C., July 14, 1826, No. 2. P. C., February 4, 1833, No. 123, 124. Scott wrote, "Purandar Singh has more ability and general information than Chandrakanta, but he is of a rather untractable disposition, and supposed to be much swayed by the

Upper Assam, except Matak and Sadiya, was placed under the rule of Purandar Singh. He agreed to pay an annual tribute of Rs. 50,000, to 'abstain from the practices of the former Rajahs of Assam, as to cutting off ears and noses, extracting eyes or otherwise mutilating or torturing,' to 'assimilate the administration of justice in his territory to that which prevails in the dominions of the Honourable Company,' to abolish 'the immolation of women by suttees,' to 'assist' the passage of the troops of the British Government through his territory, to claim no jurisdiction over British military cantonments in his territory, to 'listen with attention to the advice' of British Political Agents; and to abstain from carrying on any correspondence with foreign states.<sup>1</sup> Purandar Singh could not pay the tribute regularly; so his territory was annexed in October, 1838.

By a treaty<sup>2</sup> dated March 6, 1824, Govinda Chandra had been recognised as the protected ruler

advice of low favourites. Having been brought up in our territories he has no doubt been inspired with some degree of respect for, and gratitude to, the British Government for the favours conferred upon his family. He has also been better educated than is usual with an Assamese prince, and being possessed of considerable wealth, he would be more able to support his dignity and give his people breathing time than a starving King."

1 Aitchison, *Treaties*, etc., Vol. II, pp. 139-141.

2 Aitchison, *Treaties*, etc., Vol. II, pp. 149-150.

of Cachar.<sup>1</sup> In 1829 Scott induced him to assign to Tularam<sup>2</sup> a tract of land in the hilly regions of North Cachar. Govinda Chandra was assassinated in 1830. He left no heir, either natural or adoptive. His territory was annexed by Lord William Bentinck in August, 1832. In 1834, Tularam surrendered to the British Government the western portion of the tract ceded to him by Govinda Chandra. The eastern portion was annexed by the British Government in 1854.<sup>3</sup>

By a treaty<sup>4</sup> dated March, 1824, Ram Singh had been recognised as the protected ruler of Jaintia.<sup>5</sup> In 1832 Ram Singh died. His son and successor, Rajendra Singh, was guilty of repeated outrages on British subjects. In 1835 he was compelled to surrender his territories in the plains; the hill districts he voluntarily gave up.<sup>6</sup>

By the treaty of Yandabo<sup>7</sup> the King of Burma agreed to recognise Gambhir Singh as the ruler of

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 206-207.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 200.

<sup>3</sup> Aitchison, *Treaties*, etc., Vol. II, pp. 147, 150-151. See *Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission*, 1942, pp. 124-128.

<sup>4</sup> Aitchison, *Treaties*, etc., Vol. II, pp. 164-165.

<sup>5</sup> See pp. 208-209.

<sup>6</sup> Aitchison, *Treaties*, etc., Vol. II, p. 152.

<sup>7</sup> Article 2.

Manipur. During the military operations Gambhir Singh had succeeded in occupying not only the Manipur valley proper but also the Kubo valley,<sup>1</sup> lying to the east of the former boundary of the Manipur State, and inhabited by Shans. The Burmese Government refused to agree to the inclusion of the Kubo valley in Gambhir Singh's dominions, claiming that it was an integral portion of the Burmese Empire. Within a few weeks of the conclusion of the treaty of Yandabo some Burmese troops crossed the river Ningtee and entered the disputed valley, but they soon retired into Burmese territory of their own accord. Instead of renewing hostilities Gambhir Singh submitted the matter to the decision of the British Government.<sup>2</sup> For eight years the matter formed a subject of controversy between the Governments of India and Burma. The authorities in Calcutta championed the cause of Gambhir Singh until, in 1832, Major Burney, British Resident in Burma, submitted a confidential report in favour of the Burmese claim. In his letter dated July 5, 1832, he pointed out that the disputed valley had been a possession of the Burmese King since 1370 A.D. and that for 12 years prior to the outbreak of the late war the Burmese had

1 See p. 253.

2 S. C., May 5, 1826, No. 19, 22.

enjoyed uninterrupted possession. Lord William Bentinck thereupon decided to return the valley to Burma. The transfer took place on January 9, 1834. Gambhir Singh accepted the decision of the British Government, "but neither he nor his descendants ever willingly acquiesced in the cession" of what they considered to be their ancestral territory.<sup>1</sup> In order to compensate Manipur for this loss Bentinck agreed to give the Raja a monthly stipend of Rs. 500.<sup>2</sup> This stipend is still enjoyed by the Raja of Manipur.<sup>3</sup>

Three articles of the treaty of Yandabo remain to be discussed. There is no doubt that the article concerning money payment<sup>4</sup> fell very heavily on the Burmese. Probably the King was rich enough to pay the money from his own funds, but no minister had the 'hardihood' to suggest that 'the sum should be taken from the Royal coffers.' As a result, the ministers had to raise it 'by voluntary or compulsory contributions.' This process required time; so they repeatedly demanded 'an extension of the term of payment.'<sup>5</sup> The last instalment was paid in February,

1 For a detailed discussion, see Desai, *History of the British Agency in Burma*.

2 Aitchison, *Treaties*, etc., Vol. II, pp. 268-269.

3 Desai, *History of the British Residency in Burma*, p. 215.

4 Article 5.

5 S. C., April 14, 1826, No. 27.

1833.<sup>1</sup> Robertson observes, "Any one who had seen our paymaster standing like Brennus before a rude pair of scales, and receiving, by weight alone, costly trinkets of really beautiful workmanship, would have felt that the vanquished were humbled to the uttermost that a civilised and Christian power could desire...."<sup>2</sup>

The Burmese Government agreed by Article 11 of the treaty of Yandabo to return to British authorities 'all British, whether European or Native, American, and other prisoners.' Several thousands of Manipuri and Assamese captives were kept as slaves in different parts of Burma. When Crawford<sup>3</sup> demanded their release, the Burmese ministers argued that the treaty referred merely to prisoners of war—not to those former subjects of their King who might have been brought to Burma before the war. The argument was probably technically correct. Crawford failed to secure the release of these unfortunate slaves, and for this he was censured by the Supreme Government.<sup>4</sup>

1 For a detailed discussion, see Desai, *History of the British Residency in Burma*, pp. 12-14, 113-125.

2 *Political Incidents of the First Burmese War*, p. 236.

3 See p. 373.

4 Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy*, pp. 283-284. Desai, *History of the British Residency in Burma*, p. 8.

Article 7 of the treaty of Yandabo provided that "a Commercial Treaty, upon principles of reciprocal advantage, will be entered into" by the British and Burmese Governments. Accordingly, in September, 1826, John Crawfurd was deputed as envoy to the Court of Ava. He arrived at the capital on September 30 and had an audience of the King on October 20. He says, "The appearance of a British Mission at Ava, although specifically provided for by the Treaty of Peace, had excited a good deal of uneasiness on the part of the court, and much alarm among the people. Our little party of less than thirty Europeans had been magnified by rumour into some hundreds, and from such a force the capital itself was scarcely thought to be safe—so deep an impression had the superiority of European arms produced upon the nation at large!"<sup>1</sup>

The ministers of the Burmese King were, however, shrewd enough to reject all drafts prepared by the British envoy and to impose upon him a treaty prepared by themselves. The treaty<sup>2</sup> was signed on November 24, 1826. Crawfurd explains the advantages secured by the treaty to the British Government in the following words:<sup>3</sup>

"The first article of the convention stipulates

<sup>1</sup> Crawfurd, *Journal*, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix C.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal*, Appendix, pp. 8-9.



generally for a free commercial intercourse between the subjects of the two Governments, and for protection to the persons and property of those engaged in trade. It in fact, however, makes no alteration in the circumstances under which that trade has been long conducted; but it may be said to secure, by the formalities of a public instrument, a branch of British commerce which had hitherto existed only by sufferance.

By the second article of the Treaty, all British vessels, not exceeding fifty tons burthen, or thereabouts, are exempted from the payment of tonnage duties and port charges. This places our trade in the ports of the Burman Empire nearly on a footing with that of its own subjects and of the Chinese, whose boats and junks seldom exceed the tonnage now mentioned, and who have always been exempt from the payment of such charges. The stipulation makes no change in the state of the Burman trade at British ports. The privilege thus secured to us may, it is hoped, give rise to a coasting trade of some value and extent between the Burmese ports and our various settlements in the Bay of Bengal.

The third article secures some advantages to British merchants resident in the Burman dominions, although far short of those required by the justice and necessity of the case.

According to the Burman laws, all vessels shipwrecked upon the coast are forfeited, and become the property of the King. This arbitrary and unjust law is cancelled by the fourth and last article of the convention, which stipulates for British property shipwrecked the same immunity and protection as under civilized governments."

Article 7 of the treaty of Yandabo also provided that "accredited ministers, retaining an escort or safeguard of fifty men, from each shall reside at the Darbar of the other, who shall be permitted to purchase or to build a suitable place of residence, of permanent materials." Robertson describes this clause as the 'real blot' in the treaty. The reception of envoys, says he, was 'a measure repulsive to all Indo-Chinese nations.'<sup>1</sup> In April, 1836, the King of Burma received a letter from the Emperor of China, which contained the following remarks: "It is not proper to allow the English ... to remain in the City. They are accustomed to act like the Pipal tree<sup>2</sup> ... Let

<sup>1</sup> *Political Incidents of the First Burmese War*, p. 226.

<sup>2</sup> "Whenever this plant takes root and particularly in old temples and buildings it spreads and takes such firm hold that it is scarcely possible to be removed or eradicated ..."—Note by Major Burnery.

not Younger Brother<sup>1</sup> therefore allow the English to remain in his country ... ”<sup>2</sup>

John Crawford was the first British Resident in the Court of Ava in accordance with Article 7 of the treaty of Yandabo. When he arrived at Henzada (September 8, 1826) he found that the Burmese were very reluctant ‘to admit the residence of a permanent diplomatic agent, and especially to the military guard of fifty men.’ The Chief Officer of the town contended that the British Resident should live at Rangoon, not at Ava. The English version of the treaty provided that the ‘accredited minister’ should reside ‘at the Darbar,’ but the Burmese version of the treaty<sup>3</sup> provided that the British Agent was to live “in the royal city of Burma” (*Myanma Myodaw*). The Chief Officer of Henzada argued that Rangoon was a Royal city (*Myodaw*). Crawford refused to accept this ‘singular and unexpected’ construction of the treaty and proceeded to the capital. He remained there for a little more than two months (September 30—December 12, 1826). He left Ava without communicating with the Government; for this he was

1 King of Burma, the Emperor of China being the Elder Brother.

2 Quoted in Desai, *History of the British Residency in Burma*, pp. 246-247.

3 See Appendix B.

censured by the Vice-President<sup>1</sup> in Council<sup>2</sup> in a resolution dated April 6, 1827.

For the next three years no Resident was sent to the Court of Ava. In a minute dated December 30, 1829, Lord William Bentinck expressed the view that it was necessary to continue diplomatic relations with Burma. A Resident living at Ava, he thought, could 'gradually remove from the minds of our opponents the sore and angry feelings left there by defeat, assure them of the sincerity of our desire of cultivating friendly relations and keep our Government well informed of the real view and state of parties at the capital of Ava.' Accordingly Major Henry Burney was sent to Ava as Resident in 1830. He remained in office till 1838. He was succeeded by R. Benson, who remained in office till 1840. The careers of these two Residents lie outside the scope of this volume.<sup>3</sup> It is enough to add that the unfriendly attitude adopted by King Tharawaddy (who deposed his brother, King Bagyidaw, in 1837) compelled the Government of India to withdraw the Residency in 1840. There was no diplomatic intercourse with Burma till the

1 Lord Combermere.

2 Lord Amherst was then at Simla.

3 A detailed review of their work in Burma, based on an exhaustive study of the original sources, is available in W. S. Desai's *History of the British Residency in Burma*.

days of Lord Dalhousie, who waged another war with that country in order to safeguard the interests of the British merchants of Rangoon.

The Burmese, naturally enough, did not try to establish a permanent Residency in Calcutta, although diplomatic Missions were sent in 1827 and 1830 to discuss outstanding questions.<sup>1</sup>

After the treaty of Yandabo Bengal was no longer threatened by Burmese soldiers, but the newly acquired provinces of Arakan and Tenasserim were often harassed by Burmese robbers whom the Burmese Government could not, or would not, suppress. Burmese officers in charge of the frontier districts were officially accused by the Commissioners of Arakan and Tenasserim of encouraging murders and robberies within British territory. In 1829 the Commissioner of Tenasserim sent some troops to arrest robbers in the Burmese district of Martaban. The town of Martaban and three adjoining villages were totally burnt to the ground by these troops. Strangely enough, the Burmese Court took no notice of this violation of its territory. Even such drastic measures failed to produce a salutary effect upon the activities of frontier

<sup>1</sup> See Desai, *History of the British Residency in Burma*, pp. 13-26, 110, 153-159, 206-214.

robbers, who continued for years to disturb the peace of British subjects and officers.<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt that the treaty of Yandabo was very unpopular in Burma. With reference to Crawford's Mission Lord William Bentinck observes,<sup>2</sup> "The very sound of the word treaty appears to have excited all the fears and suspicions of the Court of Ava, and the King himself, when told the object of Mr. Crawford's Mission, is said to have cried out, What! is he come to make another Yandabo Treaty with us?" On July 12, 1837, Burney wrote, "It is well known that nothing but dire necessity forced the late Government of Ava to agree to the Treaty of Yandabo, and that it always intended to take the first opportunity of releasing itself from the engagements it had so unwillingly entered into." On one occasion Burney told a Burmese minister that the British and the Burmese, being better acquainted with each other, were less likely to engage in hostilities again. The minister laughingly answered, "Yes, we only want one more trial for the sake of *letza-kyā*" ('revenge or taking satisfaction').<sup>3</sup> The feelings of the common people Burney found to be

1 For details see Desai, *History of the British Residency in Burma*, pp. 32-40, 126-130.

2 Minute, December 30, 1829.

3 Burney's *Journal*, (Ms.), para 848.

'very rancorous and sore' against the English.<sup>1</sup> This feeling of hostility reached its culmination after the accession of Tharawaddy (1837). He openly declared that no reference should ever be made to the two treaties concluded in 1826, 'that they were a matter of reproach and shame to the Burmese that the English frightened the Burmese officers into signing them and always referred to them when they desired to shame the Burmese into granting anything which they desired.'<sup>2</sup> He plainly refused to recognise the validity of treaties concluded during the reign of his predecessor and to enter into any new 'written engagement'.<sup>3</sup> In an open Court where two British officers were present he expressed himself 'in the most offensive manner regarding the Governor-General of India' and said that the Burmese Governor of Bhamo 'was just as great a man as the Governor-General'.<sup>4</sup> In 1838 Lord Auckland had plans prepared for the invasion of Burma, if the policy of the new King rendered such a course necessary. The strengthening of British military units near the Burma frontier alarmed Tharawaddy, who made preparations for defence. In 1839 the news of the British invasion of

1 Burney's *Journal*, para 758.

2 Burney's Letter to Government, May 24, 1837, para 65.

3 Burney's Letter to Government, May 24, 1837, para 65.

4 Burney's Letter to Government, July 12, 1837, para 17.

Afghanistan encouraged him. He told an Indian Muslim merchant that Calcutta had fallen into the hands of the Mughals and that the Burmese army was strong enough, not only to conquer Tenasserim, but also to march to Calcutta through Arakan.<sup>1</sup> Whether Tharawaddy ever seriously thought of declaring war against the English, is uncertain. It was his son and successor, Pagan,<sup>2</sup> who lost his throne as a result of another war with the East India Company.

1 McLeod's (Officiating Resident) Letter to Government, September 8, 1839.

2 King of Burma, 1846-1853.





## APPENDIX A

COMMERCIAL TREATY CONCLUDED BY CAPTAIN WELSH  
WITH GAURINATH SINGH. (FEBRUARY 28, 1793).

Article 1st. That there shall henceforth be a reciprocal and entire liberty of commerce between the subjects of Bengal and those of Assam for all and singular goods and merchandizes on the conditions and in such manner as is settled in the following rules.

Article 2nd. That to facilitate this full intercourse the subjects of both nations, those of Bengal and Assam, fulfilling the conditions hereafter prescribed, be permitted to proceed with their boats loaded with merchandizes into Assam and to expose their goods for sale at any place or in any manner that may best suit their purposes without being subject to any other duties than are established by these articles.

Article 3rd. That a regular impost be levied on all goods or merchandizes whether of export or import, and that their duties be fixed as follows :

### *Imports*

1. That the salt of Bengal be subject to an impost of 10 per cent. on the supposed prime cost, reckoning that invariably at 400 rupees per 100 *maunds* of 84 *tolas* weight to the seer.

2. That the broad cloths of Europe, the cotton

cloths of Bengal, carpets, Copper, Lead, Tin Pearls, Hardware, Jewellery, Spices and the various other goods imported into Assam pay an equal impost of 10 per cent. on the invoice price.

3. That warlike implements and military stores be considered contraband and liable to confiscation excepting the supplies of those articles which may be required for the Company's troops stationed in Assam, which and every other matter of convenience for the said troops whether of clothing or provisions are in all cases to be exempt from duties.

### *Exports*

1. That the duties to be levied on all articles of export (except in such cases as are hereafter mentioned) be invariable 10 per cent. reckoning agreeable to the rates hereby annexed to each.

*Mooga Dohteis per maund of 84 tolas to the*

|                            |    |    |     |    |   |   |
|----------------------------|----|----|-----|----|---|---|
| <i>scēr</i>                | .. | .. | Rs. | 95 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Mooga thread</i>        | .. | .. | „   | 70 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Pepper</i>              | .. | .. | „   |    |   |   |
| <i>Elephants' Teeth</i>    | .. | .. | „   | 50 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Cutern Lac</i>          | .. | .. | „   | 4  | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Chuprah and quryzai</i> | .. | .. | „   | 3  | 8 | 0 |
| <i>Monjut</i>              | .. | .. | „   | 4  | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Cotton</i>              | .. | .. | „   |    |   |   |

2. That all articles of export not herein specified (with the exception of the following) and for which

no certain calculation can be made be subject to an equal impost in such instances always to be paid in kind and with respect to those articles which have been particularised that the duties be received either in money or kind, as may be most convenient to the merchant; but as it may happen that a temporary scarcity of grain may secure within Bengal and Assam, to provide against which rise every description of grain to be exempt from duties.

Article 4th. That any person or persons detected in attempting to defraud the Surgeo Deo of the duties hereby established shall be liable to confiscation of his/their property and for ever after debarred the privilege of the trade.

Article 5th. That for the purpose of collecting the said duties agents be appointed and custom houses established, for the present one at the Condahar *Chokey* and one at Gwahatty.

Article 6th. That it be the business of the agents to be stationed at the Condahar *Chokey* to collect the duties on all imports, and on all exports, that the produce of the country to the westward of Gwahatty for which they are to be held responsible (?) they are to examine all boats passing up and down the river and after having settled with the proprietor for the amount of the duties they are to grant him a passport specifying the number and quantity of each article, copy of which

they are to forward without delay to the agent at Gwahatty whether or further if it be necessary the merchant may proceed under sanction of the said pay.

Article 7th. That it be the business of the agents stationed at Gwahatty to collect the duties on all exports the produce of the country parallel to it North and South, and also on all exports the produce of the country to the eastwards as far as Now Gong, for which in like manner they are to be held responsible. They are to examine all boats passing down the River and to grant passport to the proprietor, copy of which to be forwarded to the agents at the Candahar *Chokey* who are to re-examine the cargo lest on the way between Gwahatty and this station the merchant may have taken goods on board which could not be specified in the pass granted at that place.

Article 8th. That as an incitement to the agents to be industrious in the discharge of this duty, a recompence be made to them bearing a proportion to the amount of the collections and that for the present it be fixed at 12 per cent. on the said collections which is calculated to defray all incidental Expenses.

Article 9th. That the said agents be required to be securities for each other and that the whole be bound by engagement to the Surgeo Deo not only for the purity of their conduct in the collection but also that they

abstain from having any concern either directly or indirectly, in trade.

Article 10th. That a copy of their accounts be produced on or before the 10th of every month and that the payment of the collections be made into the funds of any person the Surgeo Deo may appoint to receive it at the expiration of every quarter.

Article 11th. That the standard weight hereafter both for exports and imports be 40 *seers* to the *maund* and 84 *sicca* weight to the *seer*.

Article 12th. That as much political inconvenience might arise to both Governments from granting a general license to the Subjects of Bengal to settle in Assam no European merchant, or adventurers of any description be allowed to fix their residence in Assam without having previously obtained the permission of the English Government and that of the Surgeo Deo.

Article 13th. That as Captain Welsh, the representative of the said English Government, in consideration of the Surgeo Deo having removed the prohibitory restrictions which have hitherto existed to the detriment of a free intercourse, has signified his intention of bringing to punishment all persons from Bengal offending against the established laws of Assam or infringing these articles, so the Surgeo Deo on his part declares he will punish all abuses in his subjects tending to obstruct or

discourage the reciprocal intercourse this system is designed to promote.

Article 14th. That copies of these articles be affixed at every public place throughout Assam that none may plead ignorance and that Captain Welsh be requested to send one officially to his government.

Note. On February 6, 1794, Captain Welsh reported to the Government of Bengal as follows :—

“The commercial regulations rather between the Rajah and myself are in full force, but the principal benefit which has arisen from them is the demolition of an iniquitous monopoly, which ultimately must be productive of great pecuniary advantage, and in the mean time removes the distress of the people. From the collections at the Candahar *Chokey* the sum of Arcot Rupees 12,012-2-6 has been received, during the space of nine months, after defraying incidental expenses, and from this source the Rajah is to receive annually rupees 12,000....the overplus is destined to defray part of the expense of the detachment.

I am of opinion that this commercial compact will admit of considerable alteration with a view to the improvement of trade between the two states but the efficacy of such alteration depends in the first instance on the restoration of order, and in the second, on the degree of influence the Hon'ble Board may be desirous of obtaining in the affairs....”

## APPENDIX B

### TREATY OF PEACE CONCLUDED AT YANDABO

#### *English Version*

The treaty of Peace, between the Honourable the East India Company on the one part, and His Majesty the King of Ava on the other, settled by Major-General Sir Archibald Campbell, K. C. B. and K. C. T. S., commanding the expedition, and Senior Commissioner in Pegu and Ava, Thomas Campbell Robertson, Esq., Civil Commissioner in Pegu and Ava, and Henry Dacie Chads, Esq., Captain Commanding his Britannic Majesty's and the Honourable Company's naval force on the Irrawadi river, on the part of the Honourable Company, and Mengyee Maha-men-hlah-kyan-tan, Woongyee Lord of Laykaing and Mengyee-maha-men-hlah-thee-ha-thoo Atwen-Woon, Lord of the Revenue on the part of the King of Ava, who have each communicated to the other their full powers agreed to, and executed at Yandaboo in the Kingdom of Ava, on this twenty-fourth day of February in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty six, corresponding with the fourth day of the decrease of the moon Taboung, in the year one thousand one hundred and eighty-seven, Guadama era.

Article 1st. There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the Honourable Company on the one part, and His Majesty the King of Ava on the other.



Article 2nd. His Majesty the King of Ava renounces all claims upon, and will abstain from all future interference with, the principality of Assam and its dependencies, and also with the contiguous petty states of Cachar and Jyntea. With regard to Munnipore, it is stipulated that, should Gumbheer Singh desire to return to that country, he shall be recognized by the King of Ava as Rajah thereof.

Article 3rd. To prevent all future dispute respecting the boundary line between the two great nations, the British Government will retain the conquered provinces of Aracan, Ramree, Cheduba, and Sandway; and His Majesty the King of Ava cedes all right thereto. The Amoupectoumieu or Aracan mountains, (known in Aracan by the name of Yeoamatoung or Phokingtoun range), will henceforth form the boundary between the two great nations on that side. Any doubts regarding the said line of demarcation, will be settled by Commissioners appointed by the respective Governments for that purpose, such Commissioners from both Powers to be of suitable and corresponding rank.

Article 4th. His Majesty the King of Ava cedes to the British Government the conquered provinces of Yeh, Tavoy, Mergui, and Tennasserim, with the lands and dependencies thereunto appertaining, having the Saluen river for the line of demarcation of the frontier. Any

doubts regarding their boundaries will be settled as specified in the concluding part of Article Third.

Article 5th. In proof of the sincere disposition of the Burmese Government to retain the relations of peace and amity between the two nations, and as part indemnification to the British Government, for the expenses of the war, His Majesty the King of Ava agrees to pay the sum of one crore of rupees.

Article 6th. No person whatever, whether native or foreign, is hereafter to be molested, by either party, on account of the part which he may have taken, or have been compelled to take, in the present war.

Article 7th. In order to cultivate and improve the relations of amity and peace hereby established between the two Governments, it is agreed that accredited Ministers, retaining an escort or safe-guard, will reside at the Durbar of the other, who shall be permitted to purchase or to build a suitable place of residence of permanent materials, and a Commercial Treaty upon principles of reciprocal advantage will be entered into by the two high contracting powers.

Article 8th. All public and private debts contracted by either Government or by the subjects of either Government, with the others, previous to the war, to be recognized and liquidated, upon the same principles of honour and good faith, as if hostilities had not taken place between the two nations; and no advantage shall

be taken by either party of the period that may have elapsed since the debts were incurred, or in consequence of the war; and according to the universal law of nations, it is further stipulated, that the property of all British subjects who may die in the dominions of His Majesty the King of Ava, shall, in the absence of legal heirs, be placed in the hands of the British Resident or Consul, in the said dominions, who will dispose of the same according to the tenour of the British law. In like manner the property of Burmese subjects dying, under the same circumstances, in any part of the British dominions, shall be made over to the Minister or other Authority delegated by his Burmese Majesty to the Supreme Government of India.

Art. 9th. The King of Ava will abolish all exactions upon British ships or vessels in Burman ports, that are not required from Burman ships or vessels in British ports; nor shall ships or vessels, the property of British subjects, whether European or Indian, entering the Rangoon river, or other Burman ports, be required to land their guns, or unship their rudders, or to do any other act not required of Burmese ships or vessels in British ports.

Article 10th. The good and faithful ally of the British Government, His Majesty the King of Siam, having taken a part in the present war, will, to the fullest

extent, as far as regards His Majesty and his subjects, be included in the above Treaty.

Article 11th. This treaty to be ratified by the Burmese Authorities competent in like cases, and the ratification to be accompanied by all British, whether European or Native, American, and other prisoners, who will be delivered over to the British Commissioners; the British Commissioners, on their part, engaging that the said Treaty shall be ratified by the Right Honourable the Governor-General in Council; and the ratification shall be delivered to His Majesty the King of Ava, in four months, or sooner if possible, and all the Burmese prisoners shall, in like manner, be delivered over to their own Government, as soon as they arrive from Bengal.

#### ADDITIONAL ARTICLE

The British Commissioners being most anxiously desirous to manifest the sincerity of their wish for peace, and to make the immediate execution of the fifth Article of this Treaty as little irksome or inconvenient as possible to His Majesty the King of Ava, consent to the following arrangement with respect to the division of the sum total, as specified in the Article above referred to, into instalments; *viz.*, upon the payment of twenty-five lacs of rupees, or one quarter of the sum total, (the other Articles of the Treaty being executed), the army will retire to Rangoon. Upon the further payment of a similar sum

at that place within one hundred days from this date, with the proviso, as above, the army will evacuate the dominions of His Majesty the King of Ava with the least possible delay, leaving the remaining moiety of the sum total to be paid by equal annual instalments, in two years, from this twenty-fourth day of February, 1826, A.D. through the Consul or Resident in Ava or Pegu, on the part of the Honourable the East India Company.

*Burmese Version*<sup>1</sup>

Treaty of Peace and Friendship, between the English Company's Governor-General of India and the King of Burma, made by the Chief General, the Noble Archibald Campbell, Commissioner, Robertson, Esq., Commissioner, and Chads, Esq., Commander of the English war vessels on the Irrawadi river, appointed by the Governor-General, and Mengyee Maha-men-hla-kyan-ten,, Woon-gyee, Lord of Lakaing and Mengyee Maha-men-hla-thee-ha-thu, Atwen Woon, Lord of the Revenue, appointed by the King of Burma, at Yan-da-bo, on the fourth of the decrease of Ta-boung, in the year 1187 (Feb. 24th, 1826).

Article 1st. Let there be perpetual peace and friendship between the Governor-General and the King of Burma.

<sup>1</sup> Desai, *History of the British Residency in Burma*, pp. 463-467.

Article 2nd. The King of Burma shall no more have dominion over, or the direction of, the towns and country of Assam, the country of Ak-ka-bat (Cachar) and the country of Wa-tha'li (Jyntea). With regard to Munnipore, if Gan-bee-ra-shing desire to return to his country and remain ruler, the King of Burma shall not prevent or molest him, but let him remain.

Article 3rd. That there may be no cause of future dispute about the boundary between the two great countries, the English Government will retain the country of Aracan, that is, Aracan, Ramree, Man-oung (Cheduba) and Than-dwa, which they have conquered; and the King of Burma shall not have dominion. Let the Yo-ma and Bo-koung range of mountains, unto the Great Pagoda, on the Man-ten promontory (Cape Negrais) be the boundary. If hereafter there should be a dispute about the boundary, let men be appointed by the English and the Burmese Governments, to decide correctly, according to ancient limits. The men appointed, shall be respectable officers of Government.

Article 4th. The King of Burma cedes to the British Government the towns of Ye, Tavoy, Myik (Mergui) and Tenasserim, with their territories, mountains, shores, and islands. The Salwen river shall be the boundary. If hereafter there should be a dispute about the boundary, let it be settled as specified above.

Article 5th. The King of Burma, in order to make

manifest his desire to preserve perpetual friendship between the two great countries, and to defray part of the expenses incurred by the British Government in the war, shall pay one crore of rupees.

Article 6th. No person who has gone from one side to the other during the war, whether a Burmese subject who has joined the English, or an English subject who has joined the Burmese, whether voluntarily or by compulsion, shall be punished or molested on that account.

Article 7th. That the friendship now settled between the two great countries may be permanent, let one Government person be appointed by the British Government, with fifty attendants and arms complete, to reside in the royal city of Burma; and let one Government person, appointed by the Burman Government, with fifty attendants and arms complete, reside in the royal city of the Governor-General. And let the Burmese Governor, residing in the Ku-la country, and the Ku-la Governor, residing in the Burmese country, purchase or build anew, as they may choose, a suitable house of wood or brick for their residence. And in order to promote the prosperity of the two nations, an additional Treaty shall be made, relative to opening the gold and silver (A Burman phrase) road and trading one with another.

Art. 8th. All debts contracted previous to the war,

by the Government people or common people, shall be completely liquidated, according to good faith. No one shall be suffered to excuse himself saying, the war took place after the debt was contracted; nor shall either party confiscate the property of the other in consequence of the war. Moreover, when British subjects die in the Kingdom of Burma, and there be no heir, all the property left shall, according to the usages of white Ku-las, be delivered to the English Government person residing in Burma; and in like manner, when Burmese subjects die in the British Kingdom, and there be no heir, all the property left shall be delivered to the Burmese Government person residing there.

Article 9th. When British vessels come to Burmese ports, they shall remain without unshipping their rudders, or landing their guns, and be free from trouble and molestation, as Burmese vessels in British ports.

Article 10th. The King of Siam, the ally of the British Government, having taken part with the British in the war, shall be considered as included in the present Treaty.

Art. 11th. This Treaty shall be ratified by Commissioners appointed by the King of Burma; and all English, American, and other black and white Ku-la prisoners shall be delivered to the British Commissioners. Also the Treaty, assented to and ratified by the Governor-General of India, shall be transmitted to the



King of Burma within four months; and all Burmese prisoners shall be immediately called from Bengal, and delivered to the Burmese Government.

#### ADDITIONAL ARTICLE

The British Commissioners, in order to manifest their desire for peace, and that the King of Burma may pay with ease the crore of rupees mentioned in the fifth Article, agree that when he has paid eighteen and three quarters lacs of ticals, or one fourth part of the whole sum of seventy-five lacs of gold silver, which is one crore of rupees, the English army will retire to Rangoon. Upon further paying eighteen and three-quarters lats of ticals, within one hundred days from this date, the English army shall speedily depart out of the Kingdom of Burma. In regard to the remaining two parts of the money, one part shall be paid within one year from this date, and the other within two years, to the English Government person residing to Burma.

## APPENDIX C

### ANGLO-BURMESE COMMERCIAL TREATY OF 1826

A Commercial Treaty, signed and sealed at the Golden City of Rata-na-pura, on the 23rd of November, 1826, according to the English, and the 9th of the decrease of the Moon Tan-soung-mong 1188, according to the Burmans, by the Envoy Crawford, appointed by the English Ruler the Company's Buren, who governs India, and the Commissioners, the Atwenwun Mengyi-thi-ri-maha-then Kyan, Lord of Sau, and the Atwenwun Mengyi-Maha-men-thi-ha-thu, Lord of the Revenue, appointed by His Majesty the Burmese rising Sun Buren, who reigns over Thu-na-pa-ran-ta-Tam-pa-di-pa, and many other great countries.

According to the Treaty of Peace between the two great Nations made at Yandaboo, in order to promote the prosperity of both countries, and with a desire to assist and protect the trade of both, the Commissioner and Envoy Crawford, appointed by the English Company's Buren, who rules India, and the Commissioners, the Atwenwun Mengyi-thi-ra-maha-nunda-then Kyan, Lord of Sau, and the Atwenwun Maha-men-tha-thi-ha-thu, Lord of the Revenue, appointed by His Majesty the

Burmese rising Sun Buren, who rules over Thu-na-pa-ra-Tam-pa-di-pa, and many other great countries : these three in the conference tent, at the landing-place of Ze-ya-pu-ra, north of the Golden City of Rata-na-pura, with mutual consent completed this Engagement.

Article 1. Peace being made between the great country governed by the English Prince the India Company Buren, and the great country of Rata-na-pura, which rules over Thu-na-pa-ra-Tam-pa-di-pa, and many other great countries, when merchants with an English stamped pass from the country of the English Prince and merchants from the Kingdom of Burma pass from one country to the other selling and buying merchandize, the sentinels at the passes and entrances, the established gate-keepers of the country, shall make inquiry as usual, but without demanding any money, and all merchants coming truly for the purpose of trade, with merchandize, shall be suffered to pass without hindrance or molestation. The governments of both countries also shall permit ships with cargoes to enter ports and carry on trade, giving them the utmost protection and security; and in regard to duties, there shall none be taken beside the customary Duties at the landing places of trade.

Article 2. Ships whose breadth of beam on the inside (opening of the hold) is eight Royal Burman cubits or 19-1/10 English inches each, and all ships of

smaller size, whether merchants from the Burmese country entering an English port under the Burmese flag, or merchants from the English country with an English stamped pass entering a Burmese port under the English flag, shall be subject to no other demands beside the payment of duties, and ten takals 25 per cent. (10 sicca Rupees) for a chokey pass on leaving. Nor shall pilotage be demanded, unless the Captain voluntarily requires a pilot. However, when ships arrive, information shall be given to the officer stationed at the entrance of the sea, in regard to vessels whose breadth of beam exceeds eight Royal Burman cubits, and remain, according to the 9th Article of the Treaty of Yandaboo, without unshipping their rudders, or landing their guns, and be free from trouble and molestation as Burmese vessels in British ports. Besides the Royal Duties, no more duties shall be given or taken than such as are customary.

Article 3. Merchants belonging to one, who go to the other country and remain there, shall, when they desire to return, go to whatever place and by whatever vessel they may desire, without hindrance. Property owned by merchants, they shall be allowed to sell, and property not sold and household furniture, they shall be allowed to take away without hindrance or incurring any expense.

Article 4. English and Burmese vessels meeting with contrary winds or sustaining damage in masts,

rigging, etc., or suffering shipwreck on the shore, shall, according to the laws of charity, receive assistance from the inhabitants of the towns and villages that may be near, the master of the wrecked ship paying to those that assist suitable salvage, according to the circumstances of the case; and whatever property may remain, in case of shipwreck, shall be restored to the owner.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### I. PRIMARY SOURCES—DOCUMENTS

#### 1. *Unpublished English documents preserved in the Imperial Record Department.*

I have consulted the following :—

1. Political Proceedings (1785-1827).
2. Secret Proceedings (1785-1827).
3. Military Proceedings (1785-1827).
4. Foreign Department Miscellaneous Records (relevant volumes).
5. Military Department Miscellaneous Records (relevant volumes)<sup>1</sup>.
6. Political Letters to Court of Directors (1787-1827).
7. Political Letters from Court of Directors (1785-1827).

1 Of these the most important is *Rangoon and Ava : Intelligence Reports by Major Jackson, 1824-1827*. It is a volume of more than 500 pages, without pagination, containing miscellaneous correspondence full of information about military operations. Major Jackson seems to have been inclined to send reports coloured by his own prejudices. On one occasion he was severely censured by the Supreme Government. (Secret Consultations, November 4, 1825, No. 16).

8. Secret Letters to Court of Directors (1786-1827).

9. Secret Letters from Court of Directors (1785-1827).

These documents constitute my principal source of information. Altogether I have gone through about 1,200 volumes.

It is perhaps unnecessary to add that these documents give the most detailed and authentic account of the events narrated in this book.

## 2. *Published English documents.*

1. *Papers relating to the First Burmese War*, presented to both Houses of Parliament, February, 1825. It covers the years 1823-1824.

2. *Papers relating to East India affairs*, printed by orders of the House of Commons, May 30, 1825. It covers the years 1812-1824.

3. *Documents Illustrative of the Burmese War*, edited by Wilson.

4. *A Narrative of the First Burmese War*, a selection of documents relating to military operations edited with brief connecting notes by De Rhe-Phillipe, 1905.

(The reader of the unpublished documents mentioned above finds very little new information in these volumes).

5. Furber—*The Private Record of an Indian*

*Governor-Generalship.* It is a collection of Sir John Shore's letters to Henry Dundas, President of the Board of Control. Some letters refer to Burma and Assam.

6. Gleig—*Life of Sir Thomas Munro*, Vol. II. It contains some valuable letters written by and to Sir Thomas Munro about the First Burmese War.

### 3. *Published Bengali documents.*

In the Imperial Record Department there are some interesting historical letters written in Bengali. Some of them relate to affairs of Assam. These letters have been published by the University of Calcutta under the distinguished editorship of Dr. S. N. Sen. The name of the book is *Records in Oriental Languages, Vol. I, Bengali Letters*; or, *Prachin Bangala Patra Sankalan* (Compilation of Old Bengali Letters). Dr. Sen kindly allowed me to consult this book before sending it to the press.

## II. PRIMARY SOURCES—OLD HISTORICAL WORKS

### 1. *Burmese.*

*Konbaungset Yazawin* is the standard chronicle of the Alaungpaya dynasty. It was compiled by the State Chroniclers in the Royal Hmannan palace in 1867 at the order of King Mindon. Vol. II of the Rangoon Edition covers the period dealt with by me. It is full of details



regarding the internal history of Burma, but it is altogether useless for the student of Anglo-Burmese relations. Only the military operations of the First Burmese War are treated in some detail.

## 2. *Assamese.*

1. *Tungkhungia Buranji* is a prose chronicle dealing with the period 1671-1806. The author, Srinath Barbarua, was a distinguished officer of the Ahom Government for many years during the reigns of Gaurinath Singh, Kamaleswar Singh and Chandrakanta Singh. The compilation of the work was begun in 1804. It has been rightly described as "an Assamese historical classic of the highest importance". It gives a vivid picture of the internal condition of Assam during the period dealt with by me, but it offers very little information about British relations with Assam. For instance, only eight paragraphs are devoted to the story of Captain Welsh.

I have used the text edited by Dr. S. K. Bhuyan and published by the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Government of Assam. Dr. Bhuyan has also published an English translation, with a supplementary chapter on the period 1806-1826.

2. *Asamar Padya-Buranji* is a metrical chronicle of Assam. It is divided into two parts, *Kali-bharat Buranji* written by Dutiram Hazarika, and *Belimarar Buranji*

written by Bisweswar Vaidyadhpa. It is practically useless for my purpose.

I have used the text edited by Dr. S. K. Bhuyan.

3. *Barphukanar Git* (the ballad of Badan Chandra Bar Phukan), edited by Dr. S. K. Bhuyan.

### III. SECONDARY WORKS

The following contemporary or semi-contemporary works have been found useful :—

(1) On Burma :

Symes—*An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava*, 1800.

Cox—*Journal of a Residence in the Burman Empire*, 1827.

Bayfield—*Historical Review of the Political Relations between the British Government in India and the Empire of Ava*, 1835.

White—*Political History of Events which led to the Burmese War*, 1827.

Francklin—*Tracts, Political, Geographical and Commercial, on the Dominions of Ava*.

Bell—*A Narrative of the Late Military and Political Operations in the Burmese Empire*, 1827.

Snodgrass—*Narrative of the Burmese War*, 1827.

Doveton—*Reminiscences of the Burmese War*, 1852.

Havelock—*Memoirs of the three campaigns of*

*Major-General Sir Archibald Campbell's Army in Ava, 1828.*

Robertson—*Political Incidents of the First Burmese War, 1853.*

Gouger—*Personal Narrative of two years' Imprisonment in Burma, 1860.*

Trant—*Two Years in Ava, 1827.*

Crawfurd—*Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava, 2 vols. 1826.*

Laurie—*Our Burmese Wars, 1880.*

Wilson—*Historical Sketch of the Burmese War.*

Phayre—*History of Burma, 1883.*

Hamilton—*Account of the Frontier between the southern part of Bengal and Ava.*  
(*Edinburgh Journal of Science*, October, 1825).

(Snodgrass, Doveton, Havelock, Robertson and Trant took part in the war).

(2) On Assam :

Wade—*Geographical Sketch of Assam* (Edited by Dr. S. K. Bhuyan and published in the *Assam Review*, December, 1928—August, 1929, under the title 'Assam in the Eighteenth Century'), 1796-1802.

Pemberton—*Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India, 1835.*

- Buchanan Hamilton—*Description of Assam*, 1809.  
Robinson—*A Descriptive Account of Assam*, 1841.  
Fisher—*Memoir of the countries On and Near the  
Eastern Frontier of Sylhet.*

•  
IV. MODERN WORKS

(1) On Burma :

Harvey—*History of Burma*, 1925.

Hall—*Early English Intercourse with Burma*,  
1928.

Desai—*History of British Residency in Burma*,  
1939.

Journal of the Burma Research Society.

*Gazetteers of Burma.*

(2) On Assam :

Johnstone—*Captain Welsh's Expedition to Assam.*

Mackenzie—*History of the Relations of the  
Government with the Hill Tribes of the  
North-East of Bengal.*

Shakespeare—*History of Upper Assam, Upper  
Burma and the North-East Frontier.*

Gait—*History of Assam.*

S. K. Bhuyan—*Early British Relations with Assam.*

*Gazetteers of Assam.*

(3) On Bengal :

*Gazetteers of eastern districts.*



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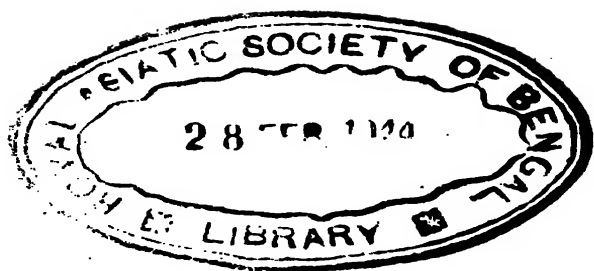
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